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Thank you! "Is it Nothing to You  
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# HIS PASSION

## Short Sermons

on the

## Great Passion of Our Dear Savior

By

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With a Greeting to the Reader by Prof. W. H. T. Dau,  
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*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*  
*John 1, 29.*



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## To the Reader — Greeting:

New Testament preaching is preaching Christ and Him crucified. This means that after the completion of the redemptive work of the Lord, His ministers must regard the explanation and application of His atoning sacrifices their one great mission. They cannot approve themselves to their hearers in any other way as that which they ought to be — preachers of righteousness, — of the righteousness that avails before the Judge of all the earth, — of the righteousness that alone creates good consciences in sinners stricken with the sense of their guilt, and yields them, as the blessed fruit of their new righteousness, acquired not by any works of their own but by their believing appropriation of the work of Christ, that boon of heaven, the peace of God, the heart's ease that quiets all their fears and overcomes the world in them and about them.

In the story of the cross there are contained also all the elements of practical Christianity. The Christ slain for sinners and the Christ dwelling in sinners who have accepted the forgiveness of sin which the Gospel of the Crucified proclaims are not two different Christs, but the one Christ who is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. All that makes the daily living of believers in the reconciliation with God which Christ effected for them pure and holy, puts the spirit of unselfish love into their actions, and ennobles their most trifling tasks, is derived from the evangel of the cross, and the example of the Holy Sufferer upon it. The source from which springs a really worthy and useful life in this world is at the foot of the cross on Calvary.

No matter, then, what subject the minister of the New Covenant treats, or what text of the Scriptures he endeavors to bring home to his hearers, he finds that the account of the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God must somehow enter into his message, and that His message, to be genuinely evangelical, must be related to

and reflect the love that made the supreme surrender of self for sinners. All Christian, all evangelical preaching is essentially cross-lifting.

It is a blessed practice of the Lutheran Church that, besides making the preaching of the reconciliation of sinners with God by the living and dying of God's Son the center of all her preaching, she devotes the season of Lent to the special consideration of the Savior's work. On the topics that constitute the story of the Great Passion of the Lord the author has offered us a collection of German sermons some years ago. That collection proved a distinct service to the Church, so much so that he was encouraged to offer this English collection also. The texts treated in this English collection are the same as in the German collection that preceded it, and the collection fairly exhausts the Passion History. But these sermons are not mere reproductions of the German sermons, but while adopting the materials of the German volume, are really new creations. They are in the plain, easy and direct style which has marked all the published work of the author and has commended his work to a large circle of readers. May the present volume prove a new contribution to the glorification of our Redeemer, and bring solace and strengthening to many hearts.

St. Louis, Mo.,  
Aug. 10, 1923.

W. H. T. DAU.

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## ECCE HOMO!

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Go to dark Gethsemane,  
Ye that feel the Temptor's power;  
Your Redeemer's conflict see,  
Watch with Him one bitter hour;  
Turn not from His griefs away;  
Learn of Jesus Christ to pray.

Follow to the judgment-hall,  
View the Lord of life arraigned;  
Oh, the wormwood and the gall!  
Oh, the pangs His soul sustained!  
Shun not suffering, shame or loss;  
Learn of Him to bear the cross.

Calvary's mournful mountain climb;  
There, adoring at His feet,  
Mark the miracle of time,  
God's own sacrifice complete;  
"It is finished", hear Him cry;  
Learn of Jesus Christ to die.

Early hasten to the tomb,  
Where they laid His breathless clay;  
All in solitude and gloom,  
Who hath taken Him away?  
Christ is risen! He meets our eyes.  
Savior, teach us so to rise!

*Lutheran Hymnal.*

THE AUTHOR.

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## On His Way to Gethsemane.

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Mark 14, 26—32.

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all. And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.

When Jesus started upon His *last* journey to the city of Jerusalem, He said to His disciples: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and on the third day He shall rise again." (Luke 18, 31—33). Only a few days hence, and these words of Jesus were literally fulfilled.

The *Great Passion* of Jesus Christ — His bitter sufferings and ignominious death — is the sacred subject upon which we wish to concentrate our devout attention during the Season of Lent. May God graciously grant that all sermons on the Great Passion of our dear Savior, which shall be delivered from this pulpit, may fall into the heart of every one who hears them! And may every one, who permits the sacred story of our Redeemer's Great Passion to enter into his heart, be and remain a true disciple of Him, who loved him unto death in order to save him from sin, death, and eternal damnation! And may every one show his sincere gratitude to the Lamb that was slain for him, by a truly Christian life!

The opening chapter of the history of Christ's Great Passion directs our pious and devout contemplation to His going to the garden of Gethsemane, which was but a short distance from the capital city of the Jewish nation. In Gethsemane His Great Passion began. By the assistance of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with our text the theme for our sacred meditation shall be:—

Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior of the World, on His Way to Gethsemane.

Let us hear,

1. *What He says to His disciples, who accompany Him:*
2. *For what reasons He goes thither.*

1.

"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives." These words of our text refer back to that which had taken place in that large upper room or hall in the city of Jerusalem, where Jesus had met with His disciples for the last time prior to His sufferings and death. Here He had celebrated the Jewish Passover with them for the last time, and here He had instituted His Supper — the Sacrament of the Altar; for St. Matthew writes: "And when they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it unto them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26, 26—28). During the Paschal Supper Jesus had talked quite freely to His disciples concerning His bitter sufferings and cruel death. He also told them that one of them would betray Him to the chiefs of the Jews. And when one disciple after the other asked Him, "Lord, is it I?" and when even Judas Iscariot asked Him, "Surely, it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus finally said to St. John: "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly . . . He, having received the sop, went immediately out," (John 13, 26. 27. 30), and betrayed Jesus to the chiefs of the Jews for thirty pieces of silver\*. After Judas had gone out of the room, Jesus delivered His farewell address to the Eleven, and His priestly intercession for His Church. (John, chapters 14—17). Then the last part of the Paschal Hymn (Psalms 115—118) was sung; the first part of it (Psalms 113 and 114) already had been sung by them at the beginning of the Paschal Supper. Now Jesus with the Eleven left the room and went to the garden of Gethsemane, which was located at the foot of the Mount of Olives.

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\* The price commonly paid for a slave in those days. According to our money about eighteen and one half dollars.

While going to Gethsemane, Jesus spoke very solemn words to His disciples, for He said unto them: "*All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.*" He tells them that all of them shall be offended because of Him that very night. What does He mean to tell them? Nothing more nor less than this: All of you will lose your faith in Me, all of you will forsake Me.

For three years the disciples had been with Jesus. They had heard all of His inspiring and wonderful sermons, and they had seen all of His manifold and many miracles. They had seen Him open the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf. They had seen Him make the lame walk, and the paralytics leap. They had seen Him free the demoniacs from the power of the devil. Yea, they had seen Him raise up the dead from the tomb by the power of His word. They were sure that He was that promised Messiah — the Son of the living God. Therefore they could not comprehend how it should be possible for Him to be delivered unto the Gentiles, and that He should be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on, and scourged, and slain. Therefore St. Luke says of them, "*And they understood none of these things.*" (Luke 18, 34). They simply would not believe that Jesus should be given up to suffering and death. That they considered altogether impossible. As they did not believe what He told them when He went with them to Jerusalem, they would not believe what He now told them on the way to Gethsemane. They considered it altogether impossible that *they* should become offended because of Him, and that *they* should fall away from Him and forsake Him. Peter, who often had been the spokesman for the rest of the disciples, vows, "*Although all shall be offended, yet will not I!*" Oh, poor Peter! In his self-confidence He dares to gainsay Him, who is Truth personified, — the veracious Son of God! He trusts in himself rather than in God's grace and power. And when Jesus tried to cure him of his self-confidence and arrogance, saying unto him, "*Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice,*" Peter did not say unto Him, O Lord, what Thou sayest is true, for Thy sayings are always true. O help me, my dear Lord, that I may not fall away from Thee! O Lord, strengthen Thou my feeble faith in Thee! No; self-confidently and vehemently he answered, "*If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee!*" And the other disciples were

like unto Peter, and they all said what Peter had said. All of them were held captive by a sinful self-confidence. They contradicted their omniscient Lord. They sinned. Indeed, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!" (1 Cor. 10, 12).

From the conversation of Jesus with the Eleven on His way to Gethsemane we should learn to become spiritually wise, my dear friends. It is written: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3, 16). We should not act the fool, saying, If *we* had been in the place of the Eleven we should not have done what they did. Whenever we put our trust in ourselves, we are just as arrogant and reckless, and just as impotent as they were. Yea, we often have made ourselves guilty of their very sin! We are God's children by adoption. He has accepted us as His dear children through the Sacrament of Baptism. When we were baptized, we renounced the devil, and all his works, and all his pomp, and we vowed that we would serve the Lord, and Him only. But there is none among us this day who can say with truthfulness that he has never broken his baptismal vow. Every time we have committed a sin knowingly or willfully, we have become backsliders and have fallen away from our dear Savior. Man's heart, so it is written, is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. (Jer. 17, 9). Whenever man prospers in the things of this world, or whenever he fares well in temporal affairs, he very often becomes spiritually reckless and arrogant, and he trusts in himself. On the other hand, however, if he is sorely troubled, when he must pine under a heavy weight of trials, tribulations, and bereavements, he is very apt to despair. Yea, man's heart is a very deceitful and desperate thing. And Christians, no less than worldlings, are often deceived by it. Such is human nature. Between the old Adam of a worldling and the old Adam of a Christian there is no essential difference. That is what God's Word teaches, and what our own experience confirms.

Indeed, my beloved fellow-Christians, very often we are guilty of the very same sin which the Eleven committed while on the way to the garden of Gethsemane with their Lord! Not infrequently we rely and trust in ourselves. How often do we not argue that we could absent ourselves from a divine service without risking spiritual harm! How often do we not imagine that no great spiritual harm would be done to us, if we were negligent in our attendance at the Lord's Table! Pray, tell me, how many are there



among us this day who can truthfully say, that they have never failed to attend at church except for such reasons as God will accept as valid in His sight? Pray, tell me, how many of us can truthfully assert that they had a keen desire at all times, to commune with their Savior as often as they approached His Table? Are there not some among us this day, who make it their habit to go to the house of God only now and then, and who approach the Lord's Table, perhaps, but once a year? Do not such rely and trust in themselves rather than in the grace and power of the Lord, and the means of grace, which God has given and instituted? Indeed! They are guilty of the very sin of which the Eleven made themselves guilty while on the way with Jesus to the garden of Gethsemane. They trust in themselves, they are self-confident and self-satisfied at heart. But self-confidence and self-satisfaction or spiritual highmindedness and arrogance are terrible sins in the eyes of the Lord. Let us be warned, my beloved fellow-Christians! Let us abhor the terrible sins of spiritual pride, of spiritual self-satisfaction and self-confidence! It is written: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble," (1 Pet. 5, 5); and again the Lord says: "Him that hath a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer." (Ps. 101, 5). Yea, "Pride goeth before a fall!" Let us be humble, my dear fellow-Christians, and let us walk in the fear of the Lord! Let us not forget that our Lord Jesus has said: "Without Me ye can do nothing." (John 15, 5). Let us daily pray with the Christian poet Solomon Franck, saying:—

O God, forsake me not!  
Take not Thy Spirit from me,  
And suffer not the might  
Of sin to overcome me;  
Increase my feeble faith,  
Which Thou Thyself hast wrought;  
Be Thou my Strength and Power,—  
O God, forsake me not!

Why did Jesus go to the garden of Gethsemane? This question I shall now answer in the second place.

## 2.

We read in our text, "*And they came to a place named Gethsemane; and He saith to His disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray.*" And, as St. Luke tells us, He added these words by way of admonition, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." (Luke 22, 40).

"*Sit ye here, while I shall pray.*" These words of our dear

Savior call to our minds the words which were spoken by Abraham about two thousand years before, when he was about to offer up his only son Isaac as a sacrifice unto God. When Abraham had come to Mount Moriah, he said to his young men or servants, "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." (Gen. 22, 5). Abraham did not tell his servants the real purpose of his and Isaac's going to the summit of Mount Moriah. Thus also Jesus. He does not tell His disciples the real purpose of His going into the garden of Gethsemane. His chief reason for going thither was this one: He wanted to go in order to make the beginning of His Great Passion. For the execution of this prime purpose He goes to the garden of Gethsemane to seek strength in earnest prayer. "Sit ye here," He says to His disciples, "*while I shall pray.*"

Jesus was a man of prayer. At times He prayed to His Father for a whole night. (Luke 6, 12). And oftentimes He chose some secluded place where He might not be disturbed in His prayers, not interrupted in His intercessions. Such a secluded place was the garden of Gethsemane. St. John tells us that Judas was not ignorant of Jesus' custom to go to Gethsemane in order to pray: for he writes, "And Judas also, who betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples." (John 18, 2). Notwithstanding the fact that Jesus is the essential Son of God, He nevertheless prayed much while He sojourned upon earth. And even now, in His State of Exaltation, Jesus is a man of prayer: for He intercedes for us with His Father.

During the last night of His life in His State of Humiliation, He goes to Gethsemane to *pray*. He had left the bosom of His Father, and had come down to this earth and into our flesh, that He might redeem us and all sinners from sin, death, and damnation. Indeed, He had undertaken to perform a great work! It is altogether impossible for us to fully grasp the immensity of this undertaking! For, what did it mean? It meant nothing less than that Jesus must suffer for the sins of all sinners. All the accusations of the divine Law, which were ever hurled against its transgressors, were preferred against Him, because He had voluntarily taken the place of sinners. All the suffering and punishment, which sinners were to suffer in time and in eternity on account of their transgressions, He had to take upon Himself and endure all. Surely, a tremendous task! Jesus was well aware of what He had undertaken to accomplish. When He therefore thought of execut-

ing this task, He began to tremble and shudder. *Luther* well remarks, that from this we can readily see that Jesus is a true man, but at the same time true God, otherwise He could not have executed so tremendous a task. As the "Son of Man" Jesus began to tremble and shudder, and therefore He goes to seek the face of His heavenly Father in prayer for strength and endurance until the superhuman task has been accomplished.

But Jesus also goes thither to merit for Himself the *right to effectually intercede with His Father for poor sinners*. Had Jesus not redeemed sinners from sin, death, and eternal damnation by His bitter sufferings and death, He could not now, in His State of Exaltation, effectually intercede with His Father in their behalf. But by His work of redemption He merited for Himself the exclusive right to effectually plead the cause of every poor sinner to the end of this world. He *alone* holds the diploma in His hand, which gives authority to appear before the judgment-seat of His Father as an advocate or intercessor for sinful men. All human intercessions must be made in Jesus' name, otherwise they avail nothing. (John 16, 23; Eph. 2, 18). We can intercede for our fellow-men and fellow-Christians effectually, when we intercede for them in Jesus' name. The Father is gracious only for Jesus Christ's sake. Without Him the Father is a consuming fire of wrath toward sinners. Jesus alone has the exclusive prerogative to make effectual intercessions with His Father for sinful men in His *own* name. And He makes abundant use of this exclusive right; for St. John says, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2, 1). Yea, Jesus unceasingly intercedes with His Father for poor sinners.

Oh, how unfortunate and miserable we poor sinners should be in time and in eternity, if Jesus had not redeemed us! Should we, therefore, not love Him, and daily thank Him for His unspeakable love towards us? Indeed, we should! But we should not only thank Him with our lips, but also with our actions, with a truly Christian life, as long as we live. By our good works we must show that we deeply and gratefully appreciate the love of Jesus, which we have experienced and still experience to this day. Yea,

His goodness all our day attends,  
His loving-kindness never ends!

Amen.

## His Agony in the Garden.

Luke 22, 41—44.

And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him, and being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Two scenes from the earthly life of our dear Savior Jesus Christ are remarkable for their wonderful contrast: His transfiguration on Mount Tabor\*, and His agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Three of His disciples — Peter, James, and John — were eyewitnesses of both scenes. The wonderful transfiguration of Jesus on the mount the Bible describes thus: "Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, let us make three tabernacles: one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead." (Matt. 17, 1—9).

The incomprehensible agony of Jesus, St. Luke describes thus in our text: "And He was withdrawn from them (Peter, James, and John) about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him, and being in

\* According to Christian tradition, the scene of Christ's transfiguration, Mount Tabor was not far from Nazareth.



an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." In accordance with these words of our text, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the subject for our sacred meditation shall be:—

**Our Dear Savior's Great Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.**

Let us consider,

1. *The intensity of His agony;*
2. *The cause of His agony;*
3. *The purpose of His agony.*

1.

St. Luke tells us of Jesus: "*And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and knelted down, and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him, and being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*"

When Jesus had come to the gateway of the garden of Gethsemane, He left eight of His disciples there, saying unto them, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."

And He took with Him Peter, James, and John, the two sons of Zebedee, into the garden, and He began to be sore amazed, and sorrowful, and very heavy. Then said He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with Me, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. And then He withdrew Himself from them about a stone's cast, and He knelted down, and fell on His face on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him; and He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt. As St. Matthew tells us, Jesus prayed thus three times.

What is meant by the *cup*, which Jesus prays, His Father might take from Him, if that be possible? By this cup nothing else is to be understood than the *great agony*, which He had to suffer. Here we meet with the first one of the many mysteries which confront us in the sacred history of our dear Savior's Great Passion! Jesus, so it seems, deemed it possible for His Father to take away from Him that cup of sorrow, that cup of great agony, which pressed Him down to the dust of the garden. We cannot

solve this great mystery, my beloved fellow-Christians, but we shall not go amiss, if we surmise that Satan actively interfered. Satan undoubtedly tried to make Jesus believe, that it could not be the will of God that His only-begotten Son should be given into such unspeakably great agony. Shortly before, Satan, through Peter, had tried to keep Jesus from going up to Jerusalem and offering Himself as a sacrifice for the sinful world; for, six days prior to His wonderful transfiguration, Jesus told His disciples that He must now go up to Jerusalem and suffer many things, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter rebuked Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee. But Jesus said to Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offense unto Me; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. (Matt. 16, 21—23). As Satan, being enforced by Peter, was unsuccessful in thwarting the divine plan of redemption, he now again tried to achieve his hellish purpose, while Jesus lay prostrate on His face in Gethsemane, groaning under the heavy weight of intense sufferings in His body and soul; for St. Luke tells us that, after the Great Temptation in the wilderness of Judah, Satan departed from Jesus only for a season. (Luke 4, 13).

But Jesus remained firm and steadfast in His determination that He would do the will of His Father. Therefore He prayed conditionally, saying, *"Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done."* If that be His Father's will. He is willing to empty the bitter cup to the very dregs.

And it is the will of His Father, that He drink it. It is impossible for Him to remove this cup from His only-begotten Son. His justice demands full punishment for the sins committed by sinful men, — whose substitute Jesus had become. But though the Father cannot *remove* this cup from Him, He can and will *strengthen* Him. Therefore He sends an angel from heaven that he might strengthen Jesus; for we read in our text: *"And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him."* The angel did not relieve Him of His agony, but strengthened Him. How did he do that? Holy Scripture does not tell us how he did it; but, perhaps, he did it in this way, that he reminded Jesus of the divine plan of the redemption of the fallen human race; that Messiah was to redeem all sinful men through His agony and death, as there could be no remission of sins without

the shedding of blood. (Hebr. 9, 22). The angel, perhaps, also called to Jesus' mind the prophecy of Isaiah: "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand . . . Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death." (Is. 53, 10, 12a). Thus Jesus was strengthened in His violent struggle, wrestling with horror and death. He became fully persuaded that it were the will of His Father, that He must drink that cup to the very dregs, that His great work of redemption might be fully accomplished. And Jesus fully and willingly submitted Himself to the will of His Father, though His agonies grew so intense, that He began to sweat blood; for our text tells us: "*And His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*" "Few men have ever felt an inward anguish competent to bring blood from the pores of their bodies. The French King, Charles IX., who had given his royal sanction to the coldblooded massacre of the thousands of Protestants that perished for their faith on St. Bartholomew's Eve, when under the horrors of remorse which befell him on his deathbed, is said to have given forth bloody sweat. If what is said of him be true, the agony, which so affected him, was nothing less than the pains of hell already fixed in his soul. And when such manifestations exhibited themselves in such a marvelous degree, in one so pre-eminently strong and celestially strengthened and divinely innocent as Jesus, we do injustice to the facts, not to find in what He suffered an agony equivalent to all the horrors of eternal damnation condensed. Well might He come to His disciples with complaints and entreaties, as if He felt it next to impossible for Him to exist under it. Such prayer three times repeated, such utterances, such descriptions, and such physical phenomena, open to us a climax of grief, conflict, and woe, which none but Himself ever knew, and which would have dissolved angels, had they been compelled to bear it." (Seiss, I, 489).

But, *why* such agony? What are the real causes of such unspeakably intense agony and anguish of Jesus in the garden? This question I shall now answer in the second place.

## 2.

St. Luke does not expressly name the causes of our dear Savior's great agony in our text; but we are not at a loss to know

what they were. The Bible everywhere tells us, why Jesus had to suffer so much, and why He had to die. We must not overlook the fact that Jesus was acting in the stead of sinful men; He suffered and died as the Redeemer of sinners. He had to make atonement for a lost sinner-world by His bitter sufferings and ignominious death. That is what the Gospel teaches. Prophesying of our Savior's sufferings and death, Isaiah cried out: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." (Is. 53, 4, 5). John the Baptist, pointing to Jesus, cried out: "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1, 29). And St. Paul, the greatest of all apostles of Jesus, said: "God hath made Him (Jesus) to be sin for us." (2 Cor. 5, 21). All these Gospel-messages tell us, *why Jesus had to suffer so much, and why He had to die*. St. Paul says by inspiration of God, that God the Father made Jesus to be sin for us sinners. Mark well, he does not say, that God made Him to be a sinner, but *sin* for us. What does that mean? It means, that the Father imputed our sins to His Son Jesus Christ, who had no sins of His own, for He was without sin, (Hebr. 7, 26; John 8, 46); that He charged the sins of all sinners to Jesus' account. He punished Jesus for the sins of mankind. When Jesus suffered, He did not suffer for His own sins and iniquities, for He had none, but for the sins and iniquities of all human beings. That is the reason, why John the Baptist cried out: "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

When Jesus suffered so terribly in His body and soul, He did not only suffer for the *temporal*, but also for the *eternal* guilt of sinners. He suffered for them the very pains of hell, which sinners must have suffered, if Jesus had not suffered in their stead. When Jesus lay prostrate in the dust of the garden of Gethsemane, and when His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, He suffered the eternal pains of hell, which were due to all sinful men on account of their transgressions of the divine Law. Let us not overlook the fact, my beloved friends, that Jesus made atonement, not only for the sins of *one man* or *one nation*, but for the sins of *all men, all nations*. No wonder, therefore, that even the Son of God became sore amazed and very heavy in His mind, and that His soul became exceeding sorrow-

ful, when He was obliged to undergo such sufferings! No wonder, therefore, that His sweat was like drops of blood falling down to the ground, and that an angel had to come and give Him succor! Yea, our sins, — your sins and my sins —, were the real cause of our Savior's great agonies!

In many times transgressing,  
In number far surpassing  
The sand upon the coast,  
I thus the cause have given,  
That Thou with grief art riven,  
And with afflictions' scourging host.

The load Thou takest on Thee,  
That pressed so sorely on me,  
Than stone more heavily.  
A curse, Lord, Thou becamest,  
Thus blessings for me claimest,  
Thy pain must all my comfort be.

Thy groaning and Thy sighing,  
Thy thousand tears and crying,  
That once were heard from Thee;  
They'll lead me to Thy glory,  
Where I shall joy before Thee,  
And evermore at rest shall be!

As we know, Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and to Gethsemane, and to Calvary *voluntarily*. Nothing but His incomprehensibly great love toward a lost and condemned sinner-world prompted Him to endure such painful agony and cruel death. What purpose did He have in view, my beloved friends, when He gave Himself up to such sufferings? This question I shall now answer in conclusion.

### 3.

We have often heard or read of a fireman, who dashed into a burning house in order to rescue someone from temporal death. Frequently the fireman was successful in saving the life of some human being. But it also frequently happens that such a fireman receives burns, to which he himself succumbs. He is proclaimed a truly great hero by his fellow-men. And justly so; for he has shown himself a hero indeed. By sacrificing his own life, he has saved the life of one or more of his fellows.

When Jesus volunteered to come down into this world and into our flesh, and to suffer and die for sinful mankind, His pur-



pose was to *save* all men from sin, death, and damnation. That such was His purpose, the Bible everywhere assures us. It is written: "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1, 21). "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3, 16). "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." (Matt. 18, 11). Similar passages we can find in many places of the Bible. All these Gospel-messages tell us that Jesus came to save sinners. What Holy Writ teaches in these Gospel-messages, *Luther* has so beautifully drawn up in his explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed, saying: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true."

Yea, my beloved friend, that you and I, all sinful men might be *saved*, that is the reason, why Jesus gave Himself up to such agonies. And He has achieved His purpose; for He saved all sinners. It is written: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1, 7). "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as a Lamb without blemish, and without spot," (1 Pet. 1, 18, 19). "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." (Rev. 5, 9). If any sinner is eternally lost, he is not lost because Jesus did not save him, but because he denies Him, who has bought him with His precious blood. (2 Pet. 2, 1). Since Jesus suffered and died for sinners, no sinner need be eternally lost!

Let us then, beloved friends, not neglect so great a salvation! Let us cling to Jesus in life and in death, and we shall not perish, but have everlasting life! God grant this for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## His Betrayal by Judas.

Matt. 26, 47—50.

And while He yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the Twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold Him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed Him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took Him.

The Bible holds up to our view two archtraitors as monuments of human depravity. They are *Doeg* and *Judas Iscariot*. Doeg was an Edomite, or descendent of Esau. He was the chief of the herdsmen of the Jewish king Saul, and Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. Doeg betrayed Ahimelech, a prophet of God, who lived at Nob, and Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Doeg delivered Ahimelech and his father's house (family) into the hands of King Saul, and by the command of this Jewish tyrant, he slew them. (1 Sam. 22). Judas Iscariot, as St. Mark tells us, went to the chiefs of the Jews to deliver Jesus unto them, and when they had heard his proposal, they rejoiced, and promised to give him some money. And from that time Judas began to seek, how he might conveniently deliver Jesus up to them. After Judas had made this traitor's contract with the chiefs of the Jews, he went into the hall in the city of Jerusalem, to which Jesus had gone with His disciples to celebrate the Paschal Supper or the Passover. Judas, the traitor, partakes of the Paschal Supper and acts, as though he were one of the very best of the Twelve. He plays the role of a hypocrite to perfection; but, of course, he cannot deceive the omniscient Jesus. While Jesus was eating the Passover with His disciples, He said that one of them would betray Him, but did not mention the traitor's name, but He, nevertheless, finally designated Judas as His betrayer; for when all the other disciples asked Him, "Lord, is it I?" and when Judas said unto Him, "Surely, it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus said unto him, "Thou hast said." And to John, Jesus said, "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot . . . He then, having received the sop, went immediately out; and it

was night." (John 13, 26, 30). Judas went back to the chiefs of the Jews, and told them that he now should be able to execute his part of the contract. The chiefs of the Jews called together an armed force of men, and put Judas at the head of them, and he led them out to Gethsemane, where Jesus had gone with His disciples. Judas said to the men, as St. Matthew tells us in our text, "*Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold Him fast.*" A kiss was the audacious sign, by which the motley crowd was to identify Jesus.

Surely, Judas committed a great sin, when he betrayed Jesus Christ. Unto the end of this world, Judas shall be a monument of disgrace, and all Christians should take warning, lest they also become traitors to Jesus, His Word, and His Church. If Judas, one of the Twelve, turned a traitor to his Savior, then none of us should think for a moment, that *he* could not fall into the very same sin, of which Judas Iscariot made himself guilty. For our warning, beloved friends, I shall now call your devout attention to:

**Judas Iscariot, One of the Twelve, the Betrayer of Jesus Christ.**

I shall speak,

1. *Of the divine love, which he had experienced; and*
2. *Of the great wickedness, which he committed.*

1.

Jesus began His Great Passion in Gethsemane. The last time I spoke to you of the intensity, the causes, and the purpose of His great agony in the garden of Gethsemane. It was chiefly a suffering of His soul, which He endured during that awful hour of anguish in Gethsemane. Jesus took with Him the three disciples that had been with Him on the mount, when He was transfigured before their very eyes. They, who had been eyewitnesses of His great glory on the mount of transfiguration, should also be eyewitnesses of His great humiliation and agony in Gethsemane.

In the History of the Passion and Death of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, according to the four Gospels, we are told: "And He took with Him Peter, James, and John, the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sore amazed, and sorrowful, and very heavy. Then said He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with Me, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and fell on His face on

the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him; and He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt. And He cometh unto His disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch with Me one hour? Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy), neither wist they what to answer Him. And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time the same words, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done. And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

"And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest! Why sleep ye? It is enough; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, and let us be going; behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me. Pray, however, lest ye enter into temptation." (Liturgy and Agenda, 411—412). "*And while He yet spake,*" so we read in our text, "*lo, Judas, one of the Twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold Him fast.*"

"Judas", in our vernacular, means a "praiser of God". Judas Iscariot became the betrayer of the Son of God. His father's name was Simon. He had lived in Kerioth, a city south of Hebron, before he became an apostle of Jesus. He was the only one of the Twelve, who was not from Galilee.

Judas Iscariot was a man whom God had endowed with great mental capacities, and Jesus had showered His divine love and mercy upon him, for He had selected him for one of His twelve apostles. That was surely a great honor! To be an apostle of the very Son of God, is, indeed, an honor of very high degree. Judas had been with Jesus for three years. He had seen all the wonder-

ful miracles, which Jesus had performed throughout all the land of Canaan. He saw, how Jesus did not only heal the sick by the power of His word, but also, how He raised up the dead from their tomb. He had heard all the wonderful sermons, which Jesus had preached during the time of His public ministrations. Yes, Jesus had selected him to be the treasurer of His company. Yea, even more! Judas himself had performed miracles in Jesus' name. From all this it is evident, that Judas Iscariot was one of the foremost of all the apostles of Jesus Christ. And his integrity was not even questioned by any of the other apostles. When Jesus said, during the Paschal Supper, that one of them would betray Him, none of the apostles suspected Judas; for everyone of them asked the Lord, "Lord, is it I?"

Even during the celebration of the Paschal Supper, Jesus showed His love toward Judas. Although Judas had already contracted with the chiefs of the Jews for Jesus' betrayal, Jesus, nevertheless, suffered him to partake of the Passover\*. He tried to prevent Judas from betraying Him, for He warned Him, saying, "The Son of Man goeth, as it is written of Him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man, if he had not been born." (Matt. 26. 24). And when Jesus spoke to His disciples of the "bread of misery", which their forefathers had eaten in Egypt, He wished to remind Judas of the eternal misery to which he was hastening. Jesus wished to warn Judas. Indeed, that was love, divine love, which He showed to His traitor. But all the love of Jesus was wasted on him. Judas would not be warned; he would not retrace his steps.

The Lord has also showered upon us His divine love. He has blessed us with spiritual and temporal gifts, all the days of our life. By nature we were children of wrath; but through holy Baptism we were taken out of the kingdom of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God. When we were baptized, God accepted us as His dear children. He, furthermore, gave unto us Christian parents, who had us instructed in the chief parts of the Christian doctrine; who taught us to pray, and showed unto us the ways pleasing unto God, and taught us to walk in them. Up to this very present, the Lord had His Word preached unto us in

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\* As St. John tells us that Judas immediately left the hall after Jesus had given him the sop, it is questionable whether he partook of the Lord's Supper. *Most probably he did not.*



its purity and entirety. Unto most of us, He has frequently given His true body and His true blood in the Sacrament of the Altar, as a pledge and seal for the remission of our sins. Indeed, my beloved fellow-Christians, God has been very kind unto everyone of us. All of us have experienced God's mercy, love, and kindness in a high degree.

But, my beloved fellow-Christians, what God has done for us, He also has done for many others; but many of them have done what Judas did: they have fallen away from the Savior, and have become backsliders. Multitudes of such, who at one time were true believers in Jesus Christ, true Christians, have betrayed Him, and have joined hands with worldlings and scoffers. They have made themselves guilty of Judas Iscariot's sin. Of the great wickedness of which Judas made himself guilty, of his terrible sin, I shall now speak to you in the second place.

## 2.

Judas Iscariot betrayed his Lord and Savior; betrayed Him, who had showered upon him His divine mercy and love. That was a great sin, a great wickedness.

For a while, Judas was a true believer, and, therefore, also a true apostle of Jesus Christ. But, little by little, he became detached from his Savior. His love for Jesus gave place to the love of money. Gradually Judas' heart was weaned away from the Savior, and before he was aware of the fact, he had become a miser. When a few days prior to His suffering and death, Jesus sat at meat in the house of Simon, whom He had cured of his leprosy. Mary, the sister of Lazarus of Bethany, took a pound of precious ointment, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Then said Judas Iscariot, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" St. John says, however, that Judas said this, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, a miser. (John 12, 2—6). Yea, Judas had turned a miser. He lusted after money. And it is written, that the love of money is the root of all evil. (1 Tim. 6, 10). His shameful avarice caused Judas to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and to deliver Him into the hands of wicked men.

Sin loves company. Thus it was with Judas. He was not only a miser, but also a hypocrite. Behold this miser's hypocrisy.

my beloved friends! Although he already had made a contract with the chiefs of the Jews to deliver Jesus unto them, he, nevertheless, feigns true friendship, when he is with Jesus. Even in the hall during the Paschel Supper, he hypocritically says to the Lord, "Surely, it is not I, Rabbi?" And when he came to Gethsemane, as the leader of that motley crowd, he feigns true friendship with Jesus; for we read in our text, "*Now he that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; hold Him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed Him.*" Oh, how shameful! Oh, the detestable hypocrite! How was it possible that Judas, one of the chosen Twelve, should do such an abominable wickedness! The answer is, Because his covetousness made him spiritually blind and deaf, so that he could not see the loving-kindness of Jesus, nor hear His merciful entreaties. Even when in Gethsemane, Jesus asked him, "Friend, wherefore art thou come? Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22, 48), he came not to himself; he realized not the great wickedness, which he had committed. We might suppose that these words of Jesus should have melted his heart with repentance; but such was not the case. Verily, beloved friends, it was not the fault of Jesus, that Judas turned a traitor, and that he was eternally lost. Judas had no one to blame, but himself. Jesus would save him, but he would not be saved from disgrace and eternal damnation. Woe, woe, to every disciple of Jesus Christ, every Christian, who will not give heed to the merciful calls and entreaties of his God and Savior! Woe, woe, be unto him, for he is undone!

There are very many, who follow Judas. Many, who betray Jesus Christ. There are untold multitudes, who at one time were true believers, true Christians, and who loved and served their Lord and Savior; but little by little they, like Judas Iscariot, became detached from Him. Perhaps some of them fell away from the Savior in the latter years of their lives. And, as was the case with Judas, so it is to this very day: most of those who commit treason against their Savior, His Word, and His Church, are slaves of this or that sin. In many cases, the sins are *covetousness* and *hypocrisy*. In many others, it is the sin of *worldliness*, which leads Christians away from Jesus, and causes them to become backsliders. St. John knew what he was doing, when he warned all Christians, saying, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father

is not in him. For all that is in the world, the *lust of the flesh*, and the *lust of the eyes*, and the *pride of life*, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." (1 John 2, 15—17). Covetousness and worldliness, yoked to hypocrisy, cause untold numbers of Christians to betray their Savior, His Word, and His Church. Ordinarily, the middle-aged and the old people are led away from their Savior by *covetousness*. The older they grow, the more covetous they become, unless they root out the sin of covetousness by daily repentance. And the young people are very frequently led away from Jesus by *worldliness*, when they give themselves to worldly pleasures, sinful amusements. Both try to cover their sin by their hypocrisy, when they are warned, either by their pastor, or one of their fellow-Christians, just as Judas did. Outwardly, of course, they appear to be Christians, for they, like Judas, still go to church, to confession, and to the Lord's Supper; but their heart is not upright, not sincere. The love for Jesus, His Word, and His Church has been supplanted by the love of money, or worldly amusement. Like Judas Iscariot, they crave for riches, or like Demas, for the pleasures of this world. And thus they betray Jesus, His Word, and His Church, and commonly, they do not truly repent, and are, therefore, eternally lost.

How is it with you, my beloved friend? Is your love for Jesus, His Word, and His Church waxing colder from day to day? Do you also think that you can be and remain a true Christian, while the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is becoming stronger in your heart? Be not deceived! Think of Judas Iscariot, and repent before it is too late! You may be able to deceive your fellow-men, your fellow-churchmembers, and your pastor; but you shall not be able to deceive Him, whom Judas tried to deceive, for He is omniscient, He knows all things. He can see into the innermost recesses of your heart. Remember the hypocritical betrayer of Jesus, and repent this day! If you truly repent, my dear friend, then Jesus will surely accept you, as He accepted His Apostle Peter, who had denied Him thrice; for He Himself has said, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6, 37). May God grant for Jesus Christ's sake, that every one of us may live in daily repentance, and love and serve Him, who suffered and died for us that we may live forever!

Amen.

## Jesus Taken Captive in Gethsemane.

John 18, 3—12.

Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked He them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He; if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way; that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none. Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him.

The first chapter of the Second Book of Kings tells us how the Lord frustrated the capture of the Prophet Elijah when King Ahaziah had sent men to take him captive. King Ahaziah sent a captain of fifty with his fifty to Elijah. The captain and his men found the prophet on a hill. The captain said to Elijah, "Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down." Elijah answered, "If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty." And fire fell down from heaven and consumed them. The stubborn king sent another captain with fifty men to apprehend the prophet. They also found the prophet on a hill. The captain said unto him, "Thou man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly." And Elijah answered and said unto him, "If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty." And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

And again, when some years later King Benhadad of Syria sent a great host to apprehend the Prophet Elisha at Dothan, the Lord stood by His prophet. In answer to Elisha's prayer, He smote the Syrians with blindness, and thus frustrated the capture of the prophet. (2 Kings 6). And, as we see from our text, the Lord also protected His disciples, who were with Him in the garden, when Roman soldiers and Jewish ruffians laid their hands on

them. But Himself He did not protect from arrest and seizure. The holy Evangelist John tells us how Jesus was taken captive in Gethsemane, in the text before us for our meditation. In accordance with the same, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, let me now call your attention to —

**Jesus Taken Captive in the Garden of Gethsemane.**

Let me show,

1. *That Jesus surrendered Himself voluntarily to His captors; but*
2. *That He demanded and secured liberty for His disciples.*

1.

Jesus of Nazareth had many enemies while He was in this world. Why did He have so many enemies? I answer, Because He spoke the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to everybody. He was not a respecter of persons. He cared not whether they were Jews or Gentiles, Judean scribes or Galilean fishermen, Pharisees or Sadducees, enemies or friends, rich or poor, high or low, cultured or illiterate, — He told all of them the truth. He rebuked the rich and learned Nicodemus, an honored and respected member of the Sanhedrin, as well as the selfish rabble that tried to make Him king in the wilderness. The self-righteous and self-complacent He upbraided, even though they belonged to the elite of the nation. With especial severity He denounced the hypocrites. As most of the Pharisees and scribes were hypocrites, they especially had to feel the lash of His stern rebuke, and, therefore, they especially hated Him with all the fibers of their treacherous heart. The chief priests and elders of the people, and the Pharisees and scribes were His most bitter enemies. His friends and disciples were chiefly from the ranks of the poor and humble. His twelve apostles, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, were Galileans, whom the elite of the Jewish nation regarded as men of low degree. The enemies of Jesus were always plotting His destruction. Even His own townspeople tried to kill Him after He had preached His first sermon unto them at Nazareth. (Luke 4, 29). And at Jerusalem the Jews made repeated attempts upon His life. (John 8, 59; 10, 31). But they failed to accomplish His destruction, because His time was not at hand. Whenever the chiefs of the Jews, and the Pharisees and scribes were together, they would always discuss this one question: How can we get Jesus of Nazareth? How can we put Him out of the way? How can we get rid of Him?



One night, while they were again together and discussing this question, they were interrupted in their deliberations by a loud rap at the door. Some one opened the door, and in came a stranger. He never had been in their company before. No one introduces him to the men, who were wont to make broad their phylacteries (Matt. 23, 5), for he was unknown to them. But the stranger is not at a loss, to know what to do: he introduces himself, and reveals unto them the reason of his unannounced nightly visit. Adroitly he steps into the midst of the unscrupulous clique, and with a twinkle in his eye and a treacherous heart he speaks to them in a low voice. They listen attentively, and their sullen faces suddenly are changed into benign countenances. Who can he be,—this mysterious stranger? None other than Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. And what did he say? He said, "*What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?*" And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him." (Matt. 26, 15, 16). The opportunity presented itself to him on the night of the Paschal Supper. During the celebration of this supper and the Sacrament of the Altar, which Jesus instituted that night, the chief priests and elders of the Jews had enough time to get all things ready for the arrest and seizure of the Lord. While Jesus and His eleven disciples left the supper-hall, and went out to the garden of Gethsemane, Judas and his associates in the diabolical plot were making ready to go after Him.

The chief priests and elders of the Jews were well aware of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth had miraculous powers, for they knew that He had performed many great miracles, and therefore they feared Him. They considered it a dangerous undertaking to tackle Him. They wanted to make sure; they believed in "safety first". Their own servants, so they surmised, would be unable to take Jesus, and therefore they petitioned the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, to lend them a helping hand. They asked him for a cohort of Roman soldiers. A cohort was the tenth part of a legion, or about six hundred men. To these they added their own servants. The whole band numbered about a thousand armed men. That there were about a thousand, we see from our text, for the *captain* spoken of in verse twelve was a *chiliarch*, that is, a commander of a thousand men. The commander of a hundred men was called *centurion*.

The generalissimo of the whole band of bravados was the

traitor Judas Iscariot, for we read in our text, "*Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.*" It was the time of the full moon, but nevertheless, they take lanterns and torches with them. Perhaps they thought, that if Jesus and His disciples should notice their approach, they might hide themselves among the shrubs of the garden. The lanterns and torches might come in quite handy. And also weapons they took with them. They had received orders to bring in Jesus dead or alive. But they surely believed that their masters would be very well pleased, if they should also bring in the disciples of Jesus. Perhaps they would reward them for their forethought and prudence. By all means they were bent on getting Jesus. Judas had said unto them, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely." (Mark 14, 14). Even though the disciples should escape, Jesus must be taken under all circumstances.

What did Jesus do when He heard them coming? St. John tells us in our text, "Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, *Whom seek ye?* They answered Him, *Jesus of Nazareth.* Jesus saith unto them, *I am He.* And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said unto them, *I am He,* they went backward, and fell to the ground."

After they had come to themselves again, they arose from the dust of the garden, but not one of them dared to lay his hands on Jesus, but some of them stretched forth their hands and laid them on the disciples. "Then asked He them again," so we read in our text, "*Whom seek ye?* And they said, *Jesus of Nazareth.* Jesus answered, *I have told you that I am He; if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way.*" Now Judas came forth and said to Jesus, "Hail, Master, and kissed Him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Matt. 26, 50; Luke 22, 48). "*Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him.*"

Is it not remarkable, my dear friends, that Jesus of Nazareth, the omnipotent Son of God, permits those wicked men to lay hands on Him, and to bind Him? Is it not remarkable, that Jesus suffers Himself to be dealt with, as though He were a common criminal? Did His miraculous powers fail Him here in the garden? Verily not, for we heard Him say, "I am He", and we have seen

the whole band fall down into the dust of Gethsemane. How can this whole transaction be explained, my beloved friends? We find the explanation in our text. St. John says that Jesus told Peter, who had drawn his sword in defense of His Master, "*Put thy sword into the sheath; the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?*" This explains it all. Jesus surrendered Himself voluntarily. He wanted to be taken, and delivered unto the Jews and Gentiles, that they might put Him to death, so that by the shedding of His blood all sinful men might be redeemed from sin, death, and damnation. That He really had all power in heaven and in earth, while He was in Gethsemane, we cannot doubt in the least, for He exhibited it by throwing the whole band to the ground, by healing the ear of Malchus, which Peter had cut off, and by *demanding and securing liberty for His disciples*. And of this I shall now speak to you in the second place.

## 2.

Although Jesus surrendered Himself into the hands of those wicked and ungodly men in the garden of Gethsemane, He by no means permitted them to take His disciples. When some of those ruffians laid their hands on His disciples, He said unto them, "*Whom seek ye?*" And when they answered, "Jesus of Nazareth," He said unto them, "I have told you that I am He; if, therefore, ye seek Me, *let these go their way.*" While He surrenders Himself unto them, He at the same time enjoins them, to keep their hands off His disciples, and let them go their way in peace. And they obeyed Him. Even though Peter had cut off the right ear of Malchus, no one arrests or seizes him. The Lord Jesus had given the command, and Roman soldiers, as well as Jewish ruffians, dare not disobey Him. Indeed, He is Lord of all lords, and all must obey Him. St. John says in our text, that Jesus thus fulfilled His saying, that of all of those whom His Father had given Him, He had lost none, save the son of perdition, that is, Judas Iscariot, His traitor.

Even as Jesus Himself was hated by many, so also His disciples had many enemies, who hated them with all their heart. If Jesus had not protected them, perhaps all of them would have been crucified with Him.

The enemies of Jesus Christ hate not only Him, but also His Word, and Church, that is, all true Christians to this very day. Infidels and scoffers, worldlings and hypocrites hate the true dis-

ciples of Jesus Christ, and they persecute them, whenever they have an opportunity to do so. The true Christians are always loyal to their country, but the worldlings and hypocrites always try their very best, to brand them as disloyal citizens and as traitors to their country. The true Christians always try to serve their God and Savior, by ministering unto the poor, the needy, the sick, the orphaned, the forsaken, and the fallen ones, but, nevertheless, they are being hated and branded by the unbelievers and false religionists as enemies of humanity. If Jesus would not protect the true Christians, they would all be dealt with by the ungodly and wicked, as He Himself was dealt with: they would kill them. His omnipotent word, spoken in the garden of Gethsemane, "*Let these go their way*", is the true Christians' shield to this very day, and it always will be their shield, as long as they must remain in this wicked and ungodly world.

Of course, my dear friends, since Jesus gave the command in the garden, "*Let these go their way*", many Christians, from St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, to the scores of Lutherans that were killed by the Bolshevists in Finland a short time ago, there have been millions upon millions of true Christians that suffered a martyr's death. The dear Savior saw fit in His wisdom, to grant them a martyr's death for His own and their eternal glory. Though a martyr's death be ever so cruel, yet it is the most glorious of all, for what can be more glorious, than to die for Jesus Christ's sake? But Jesus does not grant this blessed privilege to all true Christians, for it is His will, that His Kingdom of Grace be extended in the present world, and His Kingdom of Glory be enlarged in the world to come. And for this reason His command, given in the garden of Gethsemane, still manifests forth its divine power to this very day.

"*Let these go their way*", thus, my beloved friends, Jesus commands also the Law, death, and the devil, when they accuse His disciples, and when they stretch forth their hands, to take them captive. Christians are sinners, for they sin daily. Every time we Christians sin, the Law of God does not only accuse us of transgressions, but it also condemns us. And we become terrified. But while the divine Law accuses and condemns us, and stretches forth its arms, to take and deliver us up to God's wrath and punishment, Jesus, our dear Savior, intervenes in our behalf, and He says unto the Law, "*Let these go their way*"; for I have fulfilled all thy demands to the very letter, and I fulfilled all for these My disciples.

I am the end of the Law to every one that believeth in Me. (Rom. 10, 4).

If, furthermore, death comes unto us, and when it stretches forth its icy hands to take us, Jesus, our dear Savior, again intervenes in our behalf, and He says unto death, "*Let these go their way*": for I have overcome death in their stead, and I have brought life and immortality to light for them. (2 Tim. 1, 10). "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." (John 11, 25, 26). And we can triumphantly cry out with St. Paul, saying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 15, 55, 57). And with the Christian poet Paul Gerhardt we can sing,

Grim death with all his might  
Cannot my soul affright;  
He is a powerless form,  
Howe'er he rage and storm.

And finally, if Satan himself brings all kinds of accusations against us, as he did against Job of old, because we have sinned, and when he kindles the anger of the just and righteous God against us, on account of our transgressions, Jesus, our dear Savior, says unto him, "*Let these go their way*": for I have bought them with a precious price; they are Mine. Who gave you the right to accuse My servants? Get thee hence, Satan! And unto His Father He says, O My Father, remember that I have suffered and died for these poor sinners whom the devil accuses so vehemently, I have paid their debts. O My Father, forgive unto them all their sins, and accept them for My sake! And His Father fulfills the wish of His dear Son Jesus Christ. Oh, blessed, blessed all of those who truly believe in Jesus Christ, the Savior from sin, death, and eternal damnation! He is their mighty Helper in life and in death, in time and in eternity!

Indeed, my beloved fellow-Christians, we have a wonderful Savior! *Himself* He voluntarily surrendered into the hands of wicked men, and *Himself* He sacrificed for us, that He might redeem us from sin, death, and eternal damnation, and secure for us liberty: sweet, blessed, and everlasting liberty in the realms of His Father for evermore! And we say from all our heart,

Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,  
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee!

Amen.



## His Fleeing Apostles.

Mark 14, 50—52.

And they all forsook Him, and fled. And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him; and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

When Jesus had fed five thousand men, and, perhaps, as many women and children, in a wilderness, with five loaves of barley bread and two fishes, those men tried to make Him their king. They cried out, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world!" (John 6, 14). They meant to say, This Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the promised Messiah. They almost went wild with enthusiasm, and Jesus, to them, was one and all. But human notions are like the wind: they change very suddenly. So also with most of those enthusiastic men, who were bent on crowning Jesus their king, after He had fed them in such a wonderful manner. For the next day Jesus preached a strong sermon at Capernaum, and many of those men, whom He had fed the day before, were among His listeners. But all their enthusiasm left them, for they said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" (John 6, 60), and they turned their backs upon Jesus, and left Him. When Jesus gave them bread and meat in the wilderness, they wanted to crown Him king; but when He told them the eternal truth, they turned away from Him, and, perhaps, many of them would not have been unwilling to stone Him to death. When they had forsaken Him, Jesus asked His Twelve: "Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon; for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the Twelve." (John 6, 67—71).

What Jesus said concerning Judas Iscariot was verified, for, as we all know, Judas betrayed Him to the chiefs of the Jews for thirty pieces of silver.

But how about the other apostles? All of them had assented, when Simon Peter had said unto Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are

sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." What did they do? Alas! Simon Peter and all of them deserted the Savior, when the band took Him captive in the garden of Gethsemane. Of their shameful flight, St. Mark tells us in our text. In accordance with the same, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, let me now speak to you of —

### The Shameful Flight of All the Apostles of Jesus Christ.

We shall hear,

1. *How all of them fled when Jesus was taken captive in the garden of Gethsemane; and*

2. *How Jesus remained true unto them, notwithstanding their shameful flight.*

#### 1.

When Jesus told His Eleven, on His way to Gethsemane, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad," (Matt. 26, 31), all of them — not Simon Peter only — contradicted Him, and they all declared that they would rather die with Him than forsake Him. But what happened, my beloved friends! St. Mark says in our text, "*And they all forsook Him, and fled.*" St. Mark emphasizes the fact that *all* of the apostles forsook the Savior; not one of them remained with Him. When in Gethsemane, Jesus had said to the band of men, that came to take Him captive, "I have told you that I am He; if, therefore ye seek Me, *let these go their way.*" His disciples did not say to one another, "Our Lord has spoken the word, and all must obey Him, for He is the almighty Son of God; He will protect us, we need not fear, for no one can harm us!" No, they all forsake Him, and run away as fast as they can. Behold them fleeing, my beloved friends! See how Simon Peter runs! Simon Peter, who but a short time ago had vowed, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise." (Mark. 14, 29, 31). See how James and John speed away! James and John, who had declared that they indeed should be able to drink of the cup which Jesus was to drink of. (Matt. 20, 22). See how Thomas runs! Thomas, who had said unto his fellow-apostles, "Let us also go, that we might die with Him." (John 11, 16). And all the rest of them do what Simon Peter, and James, and his brother John, and Thomas do: they all flee as fast as they can. And there was another disciple, who was not one of

the apostles, a young man, and he also sped away, for St. Mark tells us in our text, "*And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him; and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.*" Who was this young man? Mark does not tell his name; but, most probably, it was he himself, otherwise he would hardly have given such an accurate and vivid description of the shameful flight of Jesus' disciples. See, beloved friends, what happened unto those who, trusting in themselves, had so confidently declared that *they* should never, never, never forsake the Lord Jesus! Even then it was true, what Luther has so well expressed in his well-known battle-song,

With might of ours can naught be done,  
Soon were our loss effected.

But, perhaps, some one will say, "I should not have been such a coward. I should not have forsaken the Savior, if I had been one of His disciples. I should rather have died with Him." My dear friend, thus not only the Eleven, but many others have solemnly declared. Yea, many have bitterly denounced the Eleven, because they deserted Jesus, but they did the very same thing: they abandoned Him.

There are myriads, who promised to remain true to their Savior unto death. When they were baptized in the name of the Triune God, they vowed through their sponsors, or with their own lips, that they would never leave nor forsake the Lord, His Word, and His Church, and, when kneeling before the altar of God in the presence of the Christian congregation on the day of their confirmation, they again solemnly vowed faithfulness to their God and Savior unto death. But what happened? Many of them soon forsook the Lord, His Word, and His Church. And they did it without being in danger of death. Many, like Judas Iscariot, loved money rather than their Savior, and therefore deserted Him; or, like Simon Peter, they denied Jesus for fear of being regarded as "Galileans", that is, as uncultured and unscientific people; or, like Demas, they would not deny unto themselves the sinful pleasures of this world. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, have weaned them away from Jesus, His Word, and His Church.

And many have forsaken Jesus as quickly as the Eleven did, although they, perhaps, made the most solemn promises unto Him, the very same day in which they abandoned Him. Perhaps, when

they deserted Him, they had hardly left the house of the Lord, where they had sung with the Christian congregation:—

My dear Jesus I'll not leave,  
Who for me Himself has given;  
Therefore unto Him I'll cleave,  
Nor from Him be ever driven;  
Life from Him doth light receive;  
My dear Jesus I'll not leave.

Jesus I will never leave,  
While on earth I am abiding;  
My full trust He shall receive;  
What I have without dividing,  
All to Him I freely give;  
My dear Jesus I'll not leave.

For every time one sins willfully or knowingly, he forsakes Jesus. And many have not repented again, as Simon Peter did, but they have abandoned their Savior forever.

How can such things be possible, my dear friends? The answer is, Because many rely on and trust in themselves: in their own goodness, righteousness, strength, and power. As soon as Christians trust in themselves, so soon have they forsaken their Savior. Let us, then, my beloved fellow-Christians, learn to beware of spiritual self-confidence and spiritual pride. "Pride goeth before a fall!" That is especially true of spiritual pride, and therefore the Holy Scriptures admonish all Christians, saying to every one of them, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10, 12). And again it is written: "Thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." (Rom. 11, 20, 21). Let us not rebuke and condemn the disciples of Jesus, who abandoned Him, and fled when He was taken captive in the garden of Gethsemane, but let us learn a lesson from their shameful flight: let us realize and acknowledge our own spiritual weakness, and let us beware of spiritual pride, then, my beloved friends, shall we be able, by assistance of the Holy Spirit, to remain true and loyal to our dear Savior. Let us daily pray:—

O God, forsake me not!  
But lead, full of compassion,  
With loving hands Thy child,  
That I may gain salvation,  
When here my course is run;  
Be Thou my Light, my Lot,—  
My Staff, my Rock, my Shield,—  
O God, forsake me not!

The Lord will surely not leave us, if we pray thus with a believing heart. Of this blessed fact I shall now speak to you in the second place.

2.

The disciples of Jesus, who deserted Him when He was taken captive in the garden of Gethsemane, were not forsaken by Him. Notwithstanding the fact that they all abandoned Him, He did not forsake them with His divine power, grace, and love. They had no reasons to forsake Him, for they were not in danger of death. They, of course, believed that they were, and that they had to flee in order to save their lives, but they were mistaken. They were under His protecting care. When Jesus said to His captors in the garden, "*If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way*", He did not request them to leave His disciples undisturbed, but He commanded them to let them go in peace, and they had to obey Him, for He is the Lord of all, and all must do His bidding. The Eleven, therefore, could have been undisturbed. The omnipotent Lord was able to protect them. But they did not realize His divine power, as He surrendered Himself unto His captors, and, therefore, they deserted Him, and fled.

But not only was Jesus at their side with His omnipotent power, but also with His divine grace and love. These He did not withdraw from His fleeing disciples. Oh, the gracious and benevolent Savior! He does not deal with them according to their deserts. He does not recompense to them evil for evil, but He follows them with His divine grace and love, and keeps them from abandoning Him forever. He embraces them with His divine grace and love, and leads them back into His arms of loving-kindness after their fall. By their own power they should never have been able to return unto Him. What was impossible with them. He does: He draws them unto Himself by true repentance; for, as we know from the Bible, all of the Eleven truly repented of their great sin. And afterwards they did not forsake Him, nor did they ever again flee, when danger stared them in the face on account of their confession of His name before Jews and Gentiles. Unto their end they stood up for Jesus, His Word, and His Church, and they never again deserted Him, but they rather remained true to Him unto death. According to Christian tradition, all of them, with the exception of St. John, suffered a martyr's death for the sake of Jesus and His Gospel. And in heaven it is said of them,



and of all Christian martyrs: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Revel. 7, 14—17). As soon as the Eleven learned to trust in Jesus only, they became very courageous, and without the least fear they preached the saving Gospel of the crucified and risen Savior of the world. Amidst all the storms of hatred and persecutions they remained unmovable, and like a Gibraltar, they defied all waves of human philosophies and storms of persecutions. Well done, good and faithful servants! Yea, the fleeing disciples of Jesus came back, and they fled no more!

We also, my beloved friends, have forsaken the Lord at sundry times with our heart, for, as often as we sinned knowingly, we have forsaken Him. But He did not forsake us. He has remained true to us unto this very day. And He will never forsake nor leave us, for He has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebr. 13, 5). And His promise is always sure. (Ps. 33, 4), for He cannot lie. (1 Sam. 15, 29). "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself." (2 Tim. 2, 13). The covenant, which He made with us in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, He never breaks; for it is written: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." (Is. 54, 10). Whenever we have forsaken Him, He seeks us by the preaching of His holy Word. As a shepherd seeks his lost sheep, so does the Lord seek those, who have wandered away from Him. He speaks to us in His Gospel. He assures us that He will gladly take us back as His own, if we will only retrace our steps and come back to Him with a truly penitent heart. He says, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6, 37): and He so lovingly invites us to come unto Him, saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11, 28). He assures us that, if we come to Him as penitent sinners, acknowledging our sins, and imploring His mercy, there is joy in the presence of the

angels of God over our repentance. (Luke 15, 28). Yea, even the greatest sinners will He gladly receive, if they will only come to Him with a penitent heart, trusting in His mercy. To the penitent malefactor on the cross \* He said: "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." (Luke 23, 43). For that very reason He voluntarily suffered and died, that He might be the Redeemer of sinners. And all His Gospel invitations are nothing but assurances of His loving-kindness to poor sinners. What does it mean, when He says unto us, "Son (daughter) be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee"? (Matt. 9, 2). Does it not mean: I will forgive you all your sins and transgressions, and I will accept you as My own? What does it mean, when He says in His words of institution of the Sacrament of the Altar, "Take, eat; this is My body. Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"? (Matt. 26, 26--28). Does it not mean: I gave Myself for you on the cross, and I give Myself anew unto you in, with, and under the consecrated bread and wine in the sacrament, to assure you of My divine love and mercy? And when He withdrew His visible presence from His Church on earth, did He not say, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"? (Matt. 28, 20). And what does that mean? Does it not mean: I will never forsake you in life and in death?

Let us, beloved friends and fellow-Christians, always go back to Jesus, as often as we have deserted Him, as often as we have sinned, and ask Him to forgive us and to accept us as His own. Verily, we shall not be put to shame. He will gladly accept us, as often as we go to Him with a penitent heart. And when our last hour is at hand, He will not abandon us, but He will take us from this "vale of tears" unto Himself in heaven, where we shall be with Him forevermore.

Yea, Lord Jesus,

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,  
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies:  
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

Amen.

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\* According to Christian tradition, his name was Dismas. The name of the impenitent malefactor was Gesmas.

## Simon Peter Denying His Lord.

Luke 22, 54—62.

Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall\*, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth, this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

After the band of armed men (Jewish ruffians and Roman soldiers) had taken Jesus captive in Gethsemane, where He had suffered great anguish of soul, and after His disciples had fled, His captors bound His hands, and led Him to the city of Jerusalem; for St. Luke says in our text, "*Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house.*" The name of the high priest was Caiaphas. St. John tells us that they took Jesus first to the house of Annas, who formerly had been a high priest, and who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas. This is not a contradiction as unbelievers contend, for Annas and Caiaphas lived in the same palace. The palace of the high priest of the Jews was a very large building. It was erected on an elevated, square lot, having rooms on every one of its four sides, and in the midst there was a courtyard. Caiaphas and Annas lived in the rooms opposite to each other, so that going from Annas to Caiaphas or from Caiaphas to Annas, one would have to cross the courtyard. Annas had been high priest from the year 6 to 15 after the birth of Jesus Christ. Caiaphas became high priest in the year 18, and he held the office for eighteen years. Between Annas and Caiaphas a certain man by the name of Ishmael, and the firstborn son of Annas, Eleazar, had been high priests. At that time the high priests were appointed

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\* The original text has *aule*. This Greek word means: porch; fold; courtyard. Luther translated it with: *Hof*.

by the Roman governors of Syria, and, as a rule, they were Sadducees, that is, unbelievers and worldlings. The high priests in those days were nothing more, nor less, than unprincipled politicians, who cared not at all for the well-being of the Jewish people.

While Jesus was in the house of Annas, two things occurred. In the first place, the members of the Supreme Council of the Jews, or the Great Sanhedrin, which was composed of 71 priests, scribes, and elders of the people, were called together for a meeting in the house of Caiaphas. It is very probable that all of the members appeared, with the exception of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Twenty-three members present at a called meeting constituted a quorum. The members of the Great Sanhedrin always assembled in the Council Chamber, which was called Gazith, and which was located near the Temple, but this time they met in the house of Caiaphas, for they were in great haste to pronounce the death-sentence upon Jesus of Nazareth. The high priest was, *ex officio*, the chairman of the Great Sanhedrin. And the second thing which happened during the time Jesus was in Annas' house, St. Luke relates in our text, namely, the Apostle Simon Peter denied Jesus. Yes, it is a very sad, but, nevertheless, an undeniable fact that Simon Peter thrice denied his Lord. And he denied Him willfully and knowingly. Oh, great, indeed, was the sin which Simon Peter committed! In accordance with our text, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the subject for our present contemplation shall be:—

#### The Apostle Simon Peter Denying His Lord and Savior.

Let me call your attention,

1. *To the terrible sin, which he committed; and*
2. *To his sincere repentance for this great sin.*

##### 1.

When Jesus had said to Simon Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," Simon Peter had answered, "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death." Then Jesus, solemnly warning His self-confident apostle, said to him, "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me." (VV. 31—34). These words of Jesus now were verified; for we



read in our text, "*And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, and said, Woman, I know Him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth, this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest.*"

Listen, my dear friends, what Simon Peter says! To that maid, who said, pointing to Peter, "This man was also with Him (Jesus)," he answers, "*Woman, I know Him not.*" When, after a little while, another maid pointed to Peter, saying, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth," (Matt. 26, 71), and when a friend of Malchus affirmed what the maid had said, by saying, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?" (John 18, 26), Peter said unto him, "*Man, I am not.*" St. Matthew tells us, that Peter this time made a denial with an oath, (26, 72). And when finally another man said, "Of a truth, this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilean," or, as St. Matthew gives the man's words, "Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth (betrayeth) thee," (26, 73), Simon Peter began to curse and to swear, saying, "*Man, I know not what thou sayest.*" Oh, how quickly and awfully had Simon Peter fallen! Oh, how terribly he had sinned!

How was it possible, my dear friends, that Simon Peter could knowingly and willfully deny his Lord and Savior thrice in such a short time? There were three reasons for this. The first reason was this: Simon Peter trusted in himself, in his own ability and strength. Instead of being watchful, as Jesus had admonished him to be, he followed Jesus afar off into the high priest's palace, *to see the end.* (Matt. 26, 58). The second reason for his awful fall was this: Simon Peter sat down among a lot of ruffians and worldlings *without necessity*: he could and should have avoided their company. He had forgotten the word of the Psalmist, which says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." (Ps. 1, 1). The third reason for his great fall was this: Simon Peter would not be a "*Galilean*", that is, he would not be a disciple of Jesus, as long as he was in the company of unbelieving Jews and heathen men. He had forgotten this word of Jesus,



“Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 10, 32, 33).

We find very many people in our churches, especially among the older members, who are of the erroneous opinion that they could not fall away from their Lord and Savior, because their faith in Him is so strong. Like Simon Peter, they trust in themselves, in their own strength and power, and before they become aware of it, they have fallen. There are, furthermore, multitudes of Christians, who, like Peter, associate intimately with known unbelievers and worldlings, who accept invitations to questionable entertainments given by the children of this world, and before they are aware of it, they have given their heart to worldly pleasures, and have fallen away from their Lord and Savior. This is especially true of young and inexperienced Christians. Their maxim is,

I'll first partake of youthful mirth,  
Till I'm convinced how vain this earth,  
Then shall my serious thoughts begin  
To seek God's pardon for my sin.

Yea, there are multitudes in our Christian churches, who imagine that it is not so necessary at all to be so serious about their soul's salvation, who even ignore all Christian admonitions and warnings. They condemn the entreaties of their pious parents and of their pastor. They find pleasure in keeping company with unbelievers and worldlings. And when they are in their company, they do what Simon Peter did, they deny their Lord and Savior, who shed His holy and precious blood for them, and they bring upon themselves swift destruction.

When Simon Peter was in the company of worldlings and unbelievers in the courtyard of the high priest, one said unto his fellows of Simon Peter, *“Of a truth, this fellow was also with Him: for he is a Galilean.”* He meant to say, This man is a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth. St. Matthew tells us, that he said, “Surely, thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth (betrayeth) thee!”

True Christians are also known by their *speech*; for they have different thoughts, and, therefore, they use a different speech than the unbelievers and worldlings. True Christians believe and confess the true Christian faith. Every true Christian believes and confesses with Martin Luther: “I believe that Jesus Christ, true

God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true."

The true Christian, furthermore, believes and confesses, that God's name is hallowed only, "when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity", and when men "as children of God also lead a holy life according to it".

When unbelievers and worldlings, and the so-called liberal Christians of our time, hear such speech from the heart and mouth of the orthodox or Bible-Christians, they at once begin to ridicule them, and they will flippantly say, "Listen, what those foolish people do believe and confess! They believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth is the God-man Savior of mankind. Is it not very foolish to believe that? Who can believe that God Himself became a man, in order to redeem men? We don't believe such a ridiculous dogma. Listen, what those Bible-Christians say! They say, that all of those people that do not believe in Jesus Christ as their one and only Savior, cannot be eternally saved! Why, then God would have to condemn most people! Who can believe such foolish doctrines as the Bible teaches? We pity the orthodox Christians, because they are so terribly ignorant, and believe everything what the Bible teaches! We don't do that, for we do not believe anything which we cannot understand! We are not such weak-minded old fogies!" Such, beloved friends, is the speech of the worldlings and false Christians.

And what do many Christians do, when they intimately associate with such people? They do the very same thing which Simon Peter did. They deny the Savior, His Word, and His Church, for they will say, "Oh, we are not *such* Christians, as you seem to believe. We don't believe everything the Bible teaches. We believe that ultimately all those people shall be eternally saved, who believe in a God and try to lead an honorable life. We do not belong to the old fogies, who believe in an inspired Bible, and in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth: nor do we believe that men are saved by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. No, we are not

*such* Christians. We belong to the liberal wing of Christendom. There is not much difference between you and us at all. You don't understand us correctly. We believe about the same thing which you believe, for we believe in letting every one save himself." Such, beloved friends, is the speech of those, who deny Jesus, His Word, and His Church. Outer Christendom is full of such people. If any among us have made themselves guilty of such denial of their dear Lord and Savior, then let them do, what **Simon Peter** did, that is, let them repent of their great sin. This leads us to the second part of our contemplation.

2.

St. Luke tells us in our text, "*And immediately, while he (Peter) yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.*"

Yes, Simon Peter had committed a terrible sin; for he had denied his Lord; he had fallen away from his Savior. Simon Peter even had sworn that he knew not Jesus. Oh, the terrible and awful sin, which he had committed! St. Mark tells us that Jesus had said to him, "Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." (14, 30). And it seems that Simon Peter had overheard the first crow of the cock altogether; but when the cock crew the second time, something had occurred which brought Simon Peter to a knowledge of his great and awful sin; for St. Luke says in our text, "*And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice.*" What St. Luke tells us with these words happened when Jesus was led from Annas to Caiaphas. Jesus, of course, knew all that Simon Peter had done, though He had been in Annas' house, for He is omniscient. Crossing the courtyard, Jesus sees His Apostle Simon Peter in the company of those ungodly and wicked men and women, warming himself, and Jesus looks at His apostle with a look which only Simon Peter understood. It was a sad, but gracious look. This look told Simon Peter, "Simon, Simon, what hast thou done! O Simon, Simon, how couldst thou do that! Didst thou not aver that thou wouldst rather go into prison and death with Me than deny Me? And now thou hast denied Me thrice! O Simon, Simon,

what hast thou done! O Simon, Simon, return unto Me, and I shall forgive thee!" And at this moment the cock crew the second time. Then Simon Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, "Before the cock crew twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice." And what did Simon Peter now do? Our text tells us, "*And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.*" He goes out of the company of those unbelieving and wicked people, in whose presence he had thrice denied his Savior. He goes out and he weeps bitterly. He weeps over his great sin; he weeps, because he had denied Him, who now was going into death, that Simon Peter and all sinners might live. It broke Peter's heart to think that he had denied his dear Lord and Savior, and he could not do otherwise, he had to weep most bitterly. He does not care a whit, what those men and women may think and say of him. Yes, indeed, he wishes to be a "Galilean", that is, a true disciple of Jesus, let those people say what they will. Simon Peter is now cured of his self-confidence and arrogance; he no longer trusts in himself, but, on the other hand, he does not despair, as Judas did. No, he sees in that look of Jesus nothing but love and forgiveness. He sees in it that most comforting promise of Jesus, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6, 37). He firmly believes that Jesus will forgive and accept him just as he is, in all his sin and shame, if he will only ask Him for forgiveness. And Jesus knew what was going on in Peter's heart, and He rejoiced over the repentance of His fallen apostle. And Simon Peter remained true to his Savior unto death, for he suffered martyrdom for Jesus' sake\*.

And now in conclusion, my beloved fellow-Christians, How is it with us? There is none among us, who has not at some time denied his Lord and Savior: for every time we willfully sin, we deny our most blessed Savior. O, beloved fellow-Christians, let us do what Simon Peter did! Let us weep over our sins. Let us repent and be eternally saved! Let us daily remember this word of Jesus, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!" (Revel. 1. 2, 10). So help us God for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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\* According to tradition, Simon Peter was crucified during the first of the Ten Great Persecutions in the year 67.



## Jesus Before the Great Sanhedrin.

Matt. 26, 59—68.

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death; but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto Him, Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee? But Jesus held His peace. And the high priest answered and said unto Him, I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, Who is he that smote Thee?

It is a distinctive feature of the sacred story of our dear Savior's Great Passion that, first of all, the sins of His disciples are enumerated before His great physical or bodily suffering is described. The holy evangelists, in the first place, call our serious attention to the sin of the three disciples of Jesus, who would not even watch and pray with Him, while He was in great agony in Gethsemane. They, furthermore, tell us of the great wickedness of which Judas Iscariot made himself guilty, when he betrayed Jesus into the hands of the chiefs of the Jews for thirty pieces of silver. They also relate unto us how all of His apostles fled, when He was taken captive by the band of armed men. And, finally, they do not withhold from us the sad fact, that Simon Peter thrice denied Jesus.

As we know, the holy evangelists were inspired by the Holy Ghost, when they wrote their Gospels. It is, therefore, a very distinctive feature of the sacred history of our Lord's Great Passion, that the Holy Spirit lays so much stress on the awful sins of which the disciples made themselves guilty. He must have had a special object in view by doing this. And what can that object be, my beloved friends? No doubt, He would, first of all, remind us of the fact that our sins are the real cause of our dear Savior's bitter



sufferings and ignominious death. Only those can have true comfort from the meditation of Christ's Great Passion, who realize their sinfulness, and who long for the forgiveness of their sins. If a man realizes what an awful thing it is to sin against the holy and righteous God, he will understand, why nothing less than the bitter sufferings and ignominious death of the very Son of God was necessary to make full atonement for the sins of mankind, and thus appease the wrath of God the Father. Our dear Savior suffered both mentally and bodily, for He endured unspeakable tortures of soul and body during His Great Passion.

Of His unspeakable agony of soul in Gethsemane we have already heard. The sacred story of His Great Passion now points to the unspeakable tortures of His body, which He endured. This suffering began when He was in the house of the high priest before the Great Sanhedrin of the Jews, as we see from our text. Our text tells us of the unjust sentence, which was pronounced upon Jesus by the Sanhedrists, and of the maltreatment, which He had to endure. In accordance with our text, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the subject for our present meditation shall therefore be:—

#### Jesus of Nazareth Before the Great Sanhedrin of the Jews.

Let me show,

1. *How He was tried and sentenced without cause by the Sanhedrists;*

2. *How He was mocked and maltreated by a motley crowd of ruffians.*

##### 1.

Jesus was first led to Annas, a former high priest. (John 18. 13). Annas had no legal authority to try Jesus. This all the Jews knew very well. They brought Jesus to Annas, in order to find time to make all the necessary arrangements for His trial before Caiaphas. When the members of the Great Sanhedrin had come together, and the many false witnesses had been summoned, the trial of Jesus was at once begun under the chairmanship of the high priest. Joseph Caiaphas, the high priest, had been appointed to his office by Valerius Gratus, the predecessor of Pontius Pilate.

The high priests in the time of Jesus were not what their predecessors had been. Formerly, from the days of Moses and Aaron to the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, the high priests, as a rule, had been pious men, mediators between God and His people Israel.

and in all important matters pertaining to the whole people, God would reveal His divine will to the high priest by means of the so-called *Urim and Thumim* \*. Caiaphas, as all of the high priests since the Roman dominion over the Jews, was a Sadducee. (Acts 5, 17). The Sadducees were the very opposite of the Pharisees. They denied the existence of spiritual beings, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the final judgment. (Acts 23, 8). The Sadducees were fullfledged infidels and worldlings. That such men should hold the highest office in Israel was, indeed, a shame and disgrace to the whole Jewish nation. But nothing could be done against this scandal, for the high priests were appointed by the Roman governors. The Jews now had lost their own government, and they were subject to the Roman Caesars, and governed by the decrees of Imperial Rome. What could Jesus, therefore, expect from such high priests as Annas and Caiaphas! Surely, He could expect nothing good! And in regard to the members of the Great Sanhedrin, or the Supreme Council of the Jews, the same must be said, for all of them, with but a few exceptions (Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea), were His most bitter enemies. St. Luke tells us that on the day when Pontius Pilate sent Jesus bound unto King Herod, "Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves." (23, 12). Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, and King Herod united themselves against Jesus. This is what the Pharisees and Sadducees also did. They were always at enmity between themselves, and never could agree in any matter, which pertained to the Jewish religion; but both sects hated Jesus of Nazareth, and they united against Him in order to put Him out of the way. The Sadducees hated Jesus, because He denounced their unbelief and worldliness, and the Pharisees hated Him, because He often showed them up in their true light, and rebuked them on account of their self-righteousness and hypocrisy. The opportune time to reach an agreement between both sects against Jesus had come when He had raised up Lazarus of Bethany, who had been dead for four days already. By raising up Lazarus, Jesus

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\* See: Ex. 28, 30; Num. 27, 21; Deut. 33, 8; 1 Sam. 28, 6. An entirely satisfactory explanation of the two mysterious names has not yet been furnished, and, perhaps, never can be furnished. Since the exilic period of the Jews the Urim and Thummim was lost, as we see from Ezra 2. 63. *Luther* translated Urim and Thummim with: *Licht und Recht*.

proved that He is able to resurrect the dead, and that the Sadducees were altogether wrong when they contended that the dead could not be brought back to life. When some of the Pharisees told the Sadducees, what Jesus had done at Bethany, their fury against Him reached its climax, and they were willing to help the Pharisees to put Him to death, for St. John says, "Then gathered the chief priests (high priests) and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we! for this Man (Jesus) doeth many miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him . . . Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death." (11. 47. 48. 53). When therefore Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests, and offered to deliver Jesus into their hands, and asked them, what they would give him, if he would betray Jesus, they were glad, and covenanted to give him thirty pieces of silver. (Matt. 26, 15; Luke 22, 5). Judas had kept his promise, and he had executed his part of the covenant, and Jesus had been taken captive in Gethsemane, bound, and was now standing before the Great Sanhedrin in Caiaphas' house for trial.

While Jesus was before Annas, not only the members of the Great Sanhedrin had been called together, but also many false witnesses had been summoned to appear and testify against Jesus, for we read in our text, "*Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death: but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and build it in three days.*" One of the false witnesses said, "This fellow said, *I am able to destroy the temple of God, and build it in three days,*" and the other said, as St. Mark tells us, "We heard Him say, *I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.*" (14. 58). Like all the other false witnesses, these two did not agree. About two years prior to this time, Jesus had said to the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days? But He spake of the temple of His body." (John 2, 19—21). Jesus had said unto the Jews, that the time should come when they would kill Him, but that He would rise again from the tomb. The false witnesses had misquoted these words of Jesus, as everybody knew very well. Nevertheless, Caiaphas, the high priest, arose, and said unto Jesus,

*"Answerest Thou nothing? What is it which these witness against Thee? But Jesus held His peace."* And why should He have said anything! It was not at all necessary, for the false witnesses did not agree in their testimony.

Caiaphas, however, was a very shrewd politician, and he feigned great amazement at Jesus' silence, and, playing on the high-strung nerves of the Sanhedrists, he cried out to Jesus, *"I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God!"*

The words of Caiaphas, *"I adjure Thee by the living God"*, were the customary form of words in which the Jews made an oath, and all of those, who affirmed this form of words, were considered as being under oath. Affirming this form of words, Jesus would put Himself under oath. Jesus affirmed, that is, He swore that He is in deed and in truth the Son of the living God, for He answered and said to Caiaphas, *"Thou hast said"*, that is, Yea, I am the very Son of God. And, furthermore, He said, *"Nevertheless I say unto you. Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."* Jesus would have all of them understand that the scenes some day would be changed, and that then He would sit in judgment over them. That was a very solemn warning to the Sanhedrists in general and to Caiaphas in particular. Caiaphas became alarmed, for he feared that these solemn words of warning might ward off a conviction of Jesus, and, therefore, he feigned sore distress of his mind, and he gave the sign of an aching soul of a Jew, for he rent his clothes, and said to the Sanhedrists, *"He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye?"* And his sign of distress worked like as a magic wand, for they answered and said, *"He is guilty of death."*

Yea, without any cause whatsoever, Jesus of Nazareth was condemned to death. He had been outlawed. Indeed, the greatest travesty on justice had been enameled with the sanctity of an ecclesiastical court. The most hideous crime in the annals of mankind had been perpetrated. To the end of time, and in the eyes of all lovers of honesty and justice, the Sanhedrists will stand forth as horrid monsters.

After Jesus had been condemned to death, He was also maltreated by a motley crowd of ruffians. Of this I shall now speak to you in the second place.



## 2.

St. Matthew, furthermore, says in our text, "*Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, Who is he that smote Thee?*"

After the members of the Great Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus to death, they left the house of Caiaphas, and, most probably, went to the Council Chamber (Gazith), which was located near the Temple, in order to deliberate a question of the greatest importance to them. What question? As we know, the Great Sanhedrin did not have the legal power to execute a death-sentence, for this right the Romans had taken away from it. The Great Sanhedrin, therefore, had to bring its decision before the Roman governor, whose name was Pontius Pilate, so that he might confirm the sentence which the Sanhedrists had pronounced. The Sanhedrists wished to unite on a specific charge against Jesus. They knew that Pontius Pilate had very little regard for them, and that he, therefore, might not confirm the death-sentence which they had passed, unless, of course, they should prefer and prove specific charges against Jesus of Nazareth. And, as we shall hear in the near future, — God willing —, they did present a solid front to the Roman governor, and he did as they wanted him to do.

When the Sanhedrists left the house of the high priest, some of them perpetrated a great crime against the innocent Jesus, as well as against all propriety of court, for our text tells us that they spat into the face of Jesus, and buffeted Him with their fists. Oh, what a crime! They all knew that Jesus was innocent, and that He was a great and just man, even though they disbelieved His divine Sonship, they should have at least shown common decency to Him, and, by all means, should not have travestied the sanctity of their station as members of the Supreme Council of the people of Israel. My friends, what would we say, if the members of our Supreme Court should ever make themselves guilty of such a crime? Would we not do all within our power to have them removed from their office? Indeed, we should, for such men are altogether unfit to hold such a high office.

That the servants of these Sanhedrists and other men should follow their example, is self-evident. That they really followed the example of their masters, we see from our text, for it says, "*And others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy*



*unto us, Thou Christ, Who is he that smote Thee?"* That the servants did this, St. Mark expressly declares, for he says, "And the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands," (14, 65); and St. Luke says, "And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote Thee?" (23, 63, 64). Yes, the servants did as their masters had done. And the Roman soldiers without doubt joined them in their maltreatment of the Savior of the world. Oh, what awful sins they did commit! Oh, what hatred was in them against Jesus! If Jesus had been a malefactor, He would not have been maltreated, for we do not read anywhere in the whole sacred story of the Great Passion of Jesus Christ, that any one of the malefactors, who were executed with Him, were maltreated. It seems that the hatred of them all concentrated itself upon Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the living God.

When during the time of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, Korah and his associates, numbering two hundred and fifty souls, rebelled against Moses and Aaron, the Lord commanded the earth to open her mouth, and devour them. And thus it was done, for we read in Numbers 16, 32, "And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods." Korah and his associates had rebelled against men, for Moses and Aaron were mere men, but Jesus of Nazareth is not a mere man, but the God-man Savior of the world. But the earth did not open her mouth, and did not swallow those ungodly and most wicked ruffians, who maltreated the very Son of God. Why not? Jesus would not have it that way. He wished to suffer it all, that He might deliver all sinners from their sins, from death, and from the power of the devil. Oh, how great His love toward sinful mankind! Oh, how we should thank Him for His unspeakable great love! Oh, that we may always think of His love, and daily thank Him for it, saying,

Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,  
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee!

Amen.

## Judas Iscariot, the Remorseful Traitor.

Matt. 27, 3—5.

Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the Temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

When the members of the Great Sanhedrin left the high priest's house, and went to the Gazith or Council Chamber, which was located near the Temple, Judas Iscariot, the remorseful traitor, followed them. Judas knew that the death-sentence, which they had pronounced upon Jesus, was illegal, as it had been passed during the night. Not only the old Jewish law, but also the Roman law forbade the passing of a death-sentence during the night. Both laws stipulated that a death-sentence should be passed during the daytime. Judas, therefore, knew that the Sanhedrists were legally bound to renew and confirm the sentence, which they had pronounced upon Jesus, in the house of Caiaphas, and he was of the opinion that, if he should inform the chief priests and elders of the people that Jesus were really innocent and not deserving of death at all, they would rescind their sentence and release Jesus; but Judas was very much mistaken. Judas should have known better. He had accompanied Jesus for the last three years, and he knew that the leaders of the Jews hated Him with all their heart. The Sanhedrists renewed and confirmed the sentence, which they had passed during the night, and thus they legalized it. St. Matthew tells us in the verses preceding our text, "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death: and when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate, the governor." When Judas saw what was being done, he did that of which our text speaks: he despaired, and he went and hanged himself. Surely, Jesus had spoken a very solemn truth when He had said concerning His traitor, "Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born!" (Mark 14, 21). In accordance with our text, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, let me now call your attention to —

**Judas Iscariot, the Remorseful Traitor.**

Let me show,

1. *How he despairs of forgiveness; and*
2. *How he dies by his own hands.*

1.

St. Matthew tells us in our text, "*Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.*" He speaks but a few words; but these few words are of tremendous significance and weight.

As we know, Judas Iscariot was one of the Twelve. Perhaps he was one of the foremost of the apostles, for Jesus had made him treasurer of His company. We have already heard, my beloved friends, what induced Judas to betray his Lord and Savior for thirty pieces of silver. Judas was a covetous man, a miser. When he betrayed Jesus for those thirty pieces of silver, St. Paul's word was verified which we find recorded 1 Tim. 6, 9, 10, and which reads, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Yea, Judas wished to become rich. He became a speculator. He speculated on the life of his Lord and Master. He went to the devil's exchange, and lost all he had. Judas should have known better. For three years he had been with Jesus. He knew that Jesus was not a mere man, but God, manifest in the flesh; for he had repeatedly professed that Jesus were in deed and in truth the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus had showered His love upon Judas. Judas had not only heard the wonderful sermons of Jesus, but he also had seen His wonderful works, His great and manifold miracles. He knew that Jesus was almighty, for whenever He spoke the word, it was done. When, therefore, the devil insinuated that all the Jews and Romans in the world could not harm Jesus in any way whatsoever, as He had all power in heaven and earth, and that, therefore, Judas could not go amiss if he should betray Jesus unto His avowed enemies, as they should be impotent against the almighty Son of God, and that he could trick them out of thirty pieces of silver, — Judas gave way to Satan's

wily temptation. Poor Judas! The devil had won the stakes. Judas had failed miserably in his reckless speculations; for Jesus had been sentenced to death. The thirty pieces of silver were like coals of fire in his hands. His conscience began to sting him. The devil accused him of having committed a sin which could never be forgiven him. When the chief priests and elders left the Council Chamber, and wended their way to the Praetorium or Pilate's house, Judas asked them to take back those thirty pieces of silver, for we read in our text, "*Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.*" Judas was very sorry that he had betrayed his Lord and Savior. He would have done anything, and would have given all that he possessed, if he could only undo what he had done. He cries out, ever and anon, "*I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood!*" Oh, how glad he would have become, if the chief priests and elders had taken those thirty pieces of silver and had rescinded their judgment! But all the efforts of Judas were in vain. They would not even take back those thirty pieces of silver, and they said to the remorseful traitor, "*What is that to us? see thou to that.*" They wish to say, "Why, Judas, that is none of our business, that you have sinned! Why did you do it? Did you not come to us, and did you not bargain with us to betray Jesus of Nazareth unto us? We paid what we promised to you, and you delivered Him into our hands. We got what we wanted, and you got what you wanted. We have nothing to regret. See to it how you can quiet your conscience, our conscience is not troubling us in the least. If you are eternally lost, then you have none to blame but yourself!" They go their way to the Roman governor. Judas does not go with them. No, Judas, the remorseful traitor, goes to the Temple. Why does he go to the Temple? Is it his intention to go to the house of God, in order to fall upon his knees and pray for forgiveness of his hideous crime? Oh, if he had only done that! If he had only gone and prayed for forgiveness! Surely, the dear Savior, who was going into death for all sinners, would have done for Judas what He had done for Simon Peter: He would have forgiven him his sin, and He would have rejoiced over the true repentance of His fallen apostle, for He was come to save that which was lost. He had accepted publicans and sinners.

as Judas knew, and He had vowed, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6, 37). Jesus so touchingly had invited the weary and heavy-laden to come unto Him, that He might give them rest. (Matt. 11, 28). Oh, if Judas had only gone to Jesus, as he was, in all his shame and sin, and would have said,

Just as I am, and waiting not  
To rid my soul of one dark blot,  
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, — Thou wilt receive,  
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;  
Because Thy promise I believe,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, — Thy love unknown  
Has broken every barrier down; —  
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

But Judas did not do any such thing. *Judas despaired of all forgiveness.* He believed that his sin was greater than that it could be forgiven him. Judas "*cast down the pieces of silver in the Temple, and departed,*" our text says. Poor Judas! He had lost his faith in his Savior, and thus he had lost everything!

There have been multitudes of Christians, who, like Judas Iscariot, finally despaired of forgiveness. For a while they were so blessed, and they rejoiced in God and His great salvation, which He has wrought through the bitter sufferings and ignominious death of His dear Son Jesus Christ, but by and by, little by little, a change took place in them. They began to covet the meat which perishes. The things of this world began to fascinate their heart. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life captured their soul. For a while they still went to the house of God to hear His Word, and they also appeared at the Lord's Table after great intervals of time; but finally they had lost all love for the Savior, His Word, and His Church, and, when death came, they were not ready to meet him as true Christians, and they despaired. Yea, many of them ended like Judas Iscariot, the remorseful traitor: they died by their own hands. Oh, how terrible! To have been a child of God for a time, and to have been so happy and blessed in Him and His salvation, and yet finally to despair of His forgiveness, — oh, my beloved friends, what an awful and terrible thing that must be! Having come so close to heaven, and



yet to have missed it with its eternal joy and bliss, — oh, what a terrible, what a shocking fate that must be! But such has been the fate of many persons in outer Christendom since the days of Judas, the remorseful traitor. Of many a man it must be said, "Crime was his choice and suicide his destiny." Of the untimely and horrible end of Judas Iscariot I shall now speak to you in the second place.

2.

Judas Iscariot *despaired*, that is, he thought that his sin were so great that it never could be forgiven him. He had lost his faith in his Savior, and, therefore, he despaired.

After all his efforts had failed to have the Sanhedrists to rescind their sentence, and after he had cast down those thirty pieces of silver in the Temple, he departed, "*and went and hanged himself.*" The Apostle St. Peter says, that Judas falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. (Acts 1. 18). Judas was eternally lost, for he died in his sin. Poor Judas!

Many others have ended like Judas, and were eternally lost. Indeed, it is true what the Bible says, "Sin is a reproach to any people." (Prov. 14. 34). Woe unto the one, who plays with sin! Woe to everyone, who does not combat sin, who submits to the power of sin! The Lord said to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his (sin's) desire, and thou shalt rule over him (sin)." Gen. 4, 7\*. This is a figurative statement of the Lord. He means to say, Sin will surely ruin a man if he does not rule over sin. Sin may not trouble a man for a long time, but some time it will undo him, unless he overcomes it. As a man cannot sleep in the door of a house in and out of which people constantly move themselves, thus a man, who permits sin to rest at the door of his heart, some day must despair, when his sin, like a giant, shall fetter his conscience. You must either rule over sin, or sin will rule over you. Between you and sin there is not, and there cannot be neutral ground. That is what Judas Iscariot found out, when it was too late. Even as with Judas, so it was also with

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\* This passage speaks of sin, as of a monster of wickedness; a personification of evil. Example,

"O opportunity, thy guilt is great! . . .  
And in thy shady cell, where none may spy him,  
Sits Sin, to seize the souls that wander by him."  
(Shakespeare).

King Saul, and with Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor. Both of them for a time were pious men, but they began to wink at sin, and, before they were aware of it, sin had overpowered them. They became the slave of sin, and, finally, they did what Judas Iscariot did: they despaired, and died by their own hands, and were eternally lost.

Yea, sin is indeed a reproach to any people. This is also true of the time in which we are living. There are many even today, who have fallen away from their Savior, His Word, and His Church, as Judas Iscariot did; they betray and deny the Lord that has bought them, despair, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Pet. 2, 1).

Must one not become much alarmed over the increase of suicides, homicides, and other most hideous crimes, of which reports are made in the daily newspapers? Why do men commit such awful crimes? And among these criminals there are many, who at some time have been true Christians. Many of them had pious parents, and were reared in the ways of the Lord. How is it possible that such people turn brutes? I answer, They were tempted by the devil, the world, and their own sinful flesh, and they gave way to the temptations. Little by little they were weaned away from God, His Word, and His Church. Little by little they began to sip the cup of sinful pleasures. Little by little they became entangled in the meshes of the devil's snares, and thus they became slaves of sin. They contemned the entreaties of their parents, pastor, and fellow-Christians. Instead of going to the house of God, they went to frivolous and lewd picture-shows, theaters, dance-halls, and ball-rooms. Instead of mingling with avowed Christians, they mingled with avowed worldlings and unbelievers. Instead of faithfully watching over their immortal souls, they gave themselves to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and thus they rushed from one sin to another, and it "happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire". (2 Pet. 2, 22).

And what then? Ah, the devil told them that there was no hope for them anymore; that their sins were greater than that could be forgiven them. And what then? Ah, many of them believed the devil, and they despaired, and they were eternally lost. Oh, that everyone of us should take warning! The old Roman

maxim, "Withstand beginnings", should be taken to heart by everyone of us! Oh, that all of us would withstand the beginnings which lead away from God, away from God's Word, away from the Christian Church! Oh, that all of us would withstand the beginnings of sin and iniquity, which lead to the eternal damnation of the soul! Had Judas Iscariot withstood the beginnings of covetousness, he never would have become a traitor to His Lord and Savior, and he never would have been eternally lost. O my fellow-Christian, do not play with sin! Do not speculate with sin! Do not say, Oh, it is only a little sin! Even a little sin will become a big sin, if it is not withstood. Sin is like a snowball which is rolled down from a snow-covered mountainside. By the time it reaches the foot of the mountain, it ~~has~~ become a great avalanche, bringing destruction to everything in its wake. Oh, that everyone of us would give a willing ear and a ready heart to the injunction of the Lord, "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not!" (Prov. 1, 10).

But, my dear fellow-Christians, we must not overlook one very important point, while we are meditating upon the deplorable fact that the remorseful traitor despaired and died in his sin. It was not by any means the wish of his God and Savior, that he should despair and die in his sin. No, it is God's will that all should repent and be eternally saved. Judas Iscariot, the traitor, could have been saved if he had done what Simon Peter did, — if he had truly repented. What does it mean to repent? It means, in the first place, to grieve over one's sin. This Judas did. But true repentance means more than this. It also means to embrace the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, by true faith. That is what Judas did not do. He did not believe that Jesus would forgive and accept him. He did not believe what the Gospel teaches, namely, "The blood of Jesus Christ His (God's) Son cleanseth from *all sin*." (1 John 1, 7).

Indeed, saints may fall; yea, many have fallen into great and hideous sins, as David and Simon Peter did, but if they truly repent, God will forgive their sins and accept them again, as He forgave and accepted David and Simon Peter. Oh, that none of us may forget this divine truth! So help us God for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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## The First Trial of Jesus Before Pontius Pilate.

John 18, 28—39.

Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the Hall of Judgment: and it was early: and they themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spake, signifying what death He should die. Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice. Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in Him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

In their last session, which they had held in the Gazith early in the morning, the Sanhedrists had not only legalized their sentence, which they had pronounced upon Jesus in the high priests's palace, but they also had united upon the charges or accusations, which they wished to prefer against Jesus before Pilate. After adjournment, they led Jesus to the Hall of Judgment, or the *Prætorium*, where Pontius Pilate resided during his stay in the city of Jerusalem \*. The Sanhedrists had done all within their power to have a big crowd to follow them to the Roman governor. They wished to overawe the procurator. The Jewish churchmen wanted Pilate to understand, that he was dealing with church-people, and

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\* The ordinary residence of the Roman governor of Judea was *Cæsarea*; but he went to Jerusalem at the time of the great festivals of the Jews.

not only with the common people of their church, but with its leaders. They would have him understand that, if he should fail to do their bidding, they would make it very uncomfortable and miserable for him. They meant to say that, if he wished to retain his office and tranquillity in his province, it would be best for him to do as they requested him to do. The Sanhedrists knew Pontius Pilate very well, for he had been procurator or governor for seven years already. They also knew that he, being a coward, would finally do their bidding. Yea, they were confident that he would confirm the death-sentence which they had pronounced upon Jesus. And they were not at all mistaken; for Pontius Pilate finally did as they desired that he should do.

In the text before us for our meditation we have the history of the *first* trial of Jesus before Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator. In accordance with the same, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the subject for our contemplation shall therefore now be:—

#### **The First Trial of Jesus Before Pontius Pilate.**

Let me call your attention,

1. *To the accusations, which the Jews made against Jesus; and*
2. *To the declaration, which Pontius Pilate made to the Jews.*

#### **1.**

The day, in which the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate, was the day of preparation, that is, the day before the Great Sabbath of the Passover feast, and for this reason, so St. John says in our text, the Jews *"themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover."* The judgment-hall was in the residence of the governor. Pontius Pilate was a Gentile, for he was a Roman. In the house of a Gentile, leavened bread would quite naturally be found, and thus, according to the traditions of their fathers and the teaching of their clergy, the Jews would become defiled, if they entered in. The Lord nowhere had forbidden them to enter into a house in which leavened bread might be found during the seven days of the Passover feast. He only had enjoined them to have no leavened bread in their own houses during the Passover festival; for during this time they should eat unleavened bread. But as it is now, so it was then. The commandments of men very often are much more respected than the commandments of God. This is especially true of all zealots, religious and otherwise. The Papists, for example,



deem it a sin to eat meat on Friday without a **papal dispensation**, but they frequently disregard the laws of God, whenever in their opinion they can serve their church. As an example, I quote a wellknown historical fact: the butchery of perhaps one hundred thousand Huguenots (French Protestants) by the French Papists on St. Bartholomew's Night in the year 1572. Other zealots consider it a sin even to take a sip of wine at the Lord's Table, but they disregard the Bible-doctrines concerning the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth and His atonement for the sins of mankind by the shedding of His holy and precious blood. Many strain at a **gnat** and swallow a camel. (Matt. 23, 24). And what must be said of religious zealots, must also be said of political zealots. They persecute all men that differ from them in their opinion, whenever they have the power to do so. The high priests, the elders, and the Jews in general refused to go into the Praetorium or judgment-hall for conscience's sake; but they had no regard whatever for the conscience of others, for they forced Jesus, who was a Jew by birth, into the Hall of Judgment. Thus it always has been with all religious and political zealots, as history proves. Even during the late World War, many Christians and citizens of German descent were persecuted, as though they were outcasts, and not at all deserving of the protection of the law, though the Constitution of our beloved Fatherland grants and guarantees religious and civil liberty to all law-abiding citizens alike. Someone has truly said, "To a zealot every one of his own sect is a saint, while the most upright of a different sect are, to him, children of perdition." (Kames).

As soon as the Jews had arrived at the Praetorium, they delivered Jesus unto Pontius Pilate, who had Him taken into the judgment-hall at once. The governor gave Jesus into the keeping of some soldiers, and then he went out on the Pavement, which the Jews called Gabbatha, and said unto the chief priests, the elders, and the whole Jewish rabble, "*What accusation bring ye against this man?*" Mark, my dear friends, how contemptuously Pilate speaks of Jesus! He had been governor of Judea for seven years already. It is not at all possible that he should not have heard of Jesus, whose name had been published throughout all the land of Canaan. For the last three years, every one had been speaking of that "Great Prophet", who went about preaching the kingdom of God, and performing great and many miracles, even raising up the dead. And yet, hear what Pontius Pilate says, "What accusa-

tion bring ye against this man?" He does not even call Him by His name. What did the Jews answer? They answered, "*If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee.*" The answer of the Jews was indeed very skillful. The maneuver was well contrived. But Pilate knows them very well, and he refuses the position which they wish to give him. Entering apparently into their thought, he replies without hesitation, "*Take ye Him, and judge Him according to your law.*" He wishes to say, "Very good! Since you wish to be sole judges of the case, be it so! Take the accused and punish Him yourselves, of course within the limits of your competency."

The Jews wished that Jesus should be put to death, and therefore they said to the governor, "*It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.*" The power to execute capital punishment, to put any man to death, had been taken away from the Great Sanhedrin of the Jews, about three years before the trial of Jesus. The Jews still had the power to excommunicate and to scourge a malefactor, but they had no legal power to put any man to death. If the Roman (Caesar Tiberius had not taken this power away from them, then, beloved friends, Jesus would have been *stoned* to death, for the Jews, according to their own law, were not permitted to *crucify* any one. The Jewish crucifixion was not a crucifixion in the literal sense of that word, for they would first stone the malefactor, and then hang him on a cross, after he had been killed, but would always take him down before sunset. The Romans would scourge the malefactor to be crucified, and then nail him to a cross, and let the crucified hang until dead; sometimes it occurred that the crucified would not die for days. However, in Judea the Romans would "break the legs" of a crucified one, that is, they would kill him, if he was not dead before sunset. But this they did only to retain the good will of the Jews. Otherwise they would let the crucified hang on the cross until they finally rotted and fell from the cross, or until they were torn down by dogs or jackals. When St. John, therefore, stresses the fact that the Jews said unto Pilate, "*It is not lawful for us to put any man to death,*" he wishes to make it plain to everyone, that, if the Jews had such a legal right, Jesus would have been stoned to death, and not crucified, and then He could not have been the true Messiah, for Jesus Himself had repeatedly said that He was to be crucified. To Nicodemus, who was a member of the Great Sanhedrin, Jesus had said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must

the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3. 14—16). Therefore John says in our text, "*That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spake, signifying what death He should die.*"

When the Jews became aware of the fact that Pontius Pilate was not quite ready to do their bidding, they became alarmed, and, as St. Luke says, they brought forth a new charge against Jesus, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying, that He Himself is Christ a King." (23, 2). That, of course, was a downright lie, and they knew very well, that they were telling a falsehood, for when they had asked Jesus some time before, whether it were lawful for the Jews to give tribute to Caesar, Jesus said to them, "Show Me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Caesar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." (Matt. 22, 19—22). And had not Jesus withdrawn Himself from the Jewish multitude in the wilderness, when they wished to make Him their king? Indeed, He had. (John 6, 15).

We read in our text, "Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, *Art Thou the King of the Jews?* Jesus answered him, *Sayest thou that thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?* Pilate answered, *Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done?* Jesus answered, *My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is My kingdom not from hence.* Pilate therefore said unto Him, *Art Thou a king then?* Jesus answered, *Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice.* Pilate saith unto Him, *What is truth?"*

This conversation between Jesus and the Roman governor is self-explanatory. Pilate knew what he wished to know. He was positive that Jesus of Nazareth was not a king in the *political*

sense of the term, and that therefore Caesar had no rival in Jesus. Whether or not Jesus was the King of the Jews in any other sense of the term, concerned him not. He is quite sure that Jesus of Nazareth, whether He be a dreamer or a sage, is not in any way a rival of Caesar.

What should Pontius Pilate now have done, my beloved friends? He should have released Jesus at once. But what did he do? What he did, we shall now hear in the second place.

## 2.

Pilate had said unto Jesus, "*What is truth?*" But it was not at all his intention to find out what truth is; for as soon as he had asked this question, he turned himself away from Jesus and went out to the Jews, and made this declaration, "*I find in Him no fault at all.*"

There cannot be the least doubt about it that Pontius Pilate spoke the whole truth when he said to the Jews of Jesus, "I find no fault in Him at all." It cannot be denied that Pontius Pilate spoke the truth when he made this solemn declaration, for Jesus was not what the Jews accused Him of being. If Pilate had been a just judge, he would not have declared unto the Jews, "I find no fault in Him at all," but he would also have said to them, "Jesus is no seditious, rioting demagogue, as you claim; He is innocent of the awful crime of which you accuse Him, and therefore I, by virtue of my office, release Him, and if you shall dare to harm Him in any way whatsoever, you shall be punished to the full extent of the Roman law," and, turning himself to Jesus, he would have said to Him, "Jesus of Nazareth, I find that Thou art not guilty; go Thy way in peace!" But Pontius Pilate did not do any such thing. He was neither an upright man, nor a just judge. No, he was nothing but a wily politician. For humane reasons he hated to have the faultless Jesus put to death, but at the same time he wished to preserve for himself the good will of the Jews, and, therefore, he began to bargain with them for Jesus, for we read in our text, that he said to them, "*But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?*"

For centuries it had been a standing custom in Israel, that their king would pardon any criminal they desired to be pardoned, on the Passover festival. Most probably this was done to remind the Jews of the fact that they had been liberated from the thralldom of Egypt.



dom and tyranny of the Egyptians. This old Jewish custom the Roman Caesars respected. For the last seven years Pontius Pilate always had released a criminal unto the Jews on the Passover festival. And now he reminds them of this old custom, and offers to release Jesus unto them. There was a tinge of irony in his remark to the Jews, when he said to them, "Will ye therefore that I release unto you the *King of the Jews?*" He might have known that under existing circumstances they would not ask for the release of Jesus, and, besides, Jesus was not a criminal at all, but, as Pilate himself had declared to the Jews, a *faultless man*. Yea, Pontius Pilate was indeed a wily politician and an unjust judge! He hated the Jews, but at the same time he also feared them. And he had reasons to fear them, for he had made himself guilty of a great crime recently. He had sent some soldiers into the Temple where some Jews from Galilee were offering sacrifices, and had them slain, mingling their blood with the blood of the sacrifices. (Luke 13, 1). He knew that Caesar Tiberius would dismiss him from his office, if the Jews should report it to him. That was perhaps the chief reason, why he bargained with the chief priests and elders of the Jews for Jesus, and why he acted so unjustly towards the faultless Nazarene.

There are many so-called Christians in outer Christendom who are like Pontius Pilate. They want to be friends of Jesus and His Church, but at the same time they do not want to lose the friendship of the unbelievers and worldlings, and, therefore, they finally deny Jesus, His Word, and His Church, and bring upon themselves swift destruction; for they are eternally damned. O beloved fellow-Christians, let us not try to serve two masters, for we cannot do it! Let us cling to Jesus, His Word, and His Church, in life and in death, and be eternally saved! So help us God for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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## Jesus of Nazareth Before Herod Antipas.

Luke 23, 5—12.

And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad; for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. And Herod with his men of war set Him at naught, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves.

The *first* trial of Jesus before Pontius Pilate had come to an end when the Roman governor went out on the Pavement and said unto the Jews, "I find no fault in Him at all."

From all that Pontius Pilate had heard, he was persuaded that Jesus was not a rival of Caesar, and that was all he cared to know. He should have released Jesus after he had declared to the Jews, "I find no fault in Him at all." He, however, did not release the faultless Nazarene; but he began to bargain with the Jews for the release of Jesus, for he said to them, "But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" And now, as St. Luke tells us in our text, the Jews became fiercer in their accusation against Jesus, for they said to Pilate, "*He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.*" When Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, and, therefore, under the legal jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. Pontius Pilate wished to get rid of the whole affair that was so troublesome to him, and at the same time he wanted to gain the friendship of Herod Antipas. These were, no doubt, the reasons why he sent the Jews with Jesus unto Herod. They did as Pilate had enjoined them: they led Jesus to the palace of Herod, most probably the very same palace in which Herod the Great had resided. Herod's ordinary residence was at Tiberias in Galilee. Herod Antipas was

not a Jew, but an Edomite, yet, for political reasons, he had become a member of the Jewish church, and therefore he always went to Jerusalem at the time of the great Jewish festivals. What happened unto Jesus while He was before Herod Antipas, St. Luke relates in our text. In accordance with the same, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the subject for our present meditation shall therefore be: —

### Jesus of Nazareth Before Herod Antipas.

We shall hear,

1. *That He was severely tempted;*
2. *That He was utterly despised; and*
3. *That He was found not guilty of death.*

#### 1.

Herod Antipas was a son of King Herod the Great. His father had all the male children of Bethlehem slain that were two years old and under, in order to put the Child Jesus out of the way, for he feared that Jesus, whom the wise men from the far east had called the King of the Jews, might some day take from him his kingdom. But as we know, the cruel king failed to slaughter Jesus, because an angel of the Lord had warned Joseph, and had enjoined him to take the Child and His mother and go into Egypt. Herod the Great died soon afterwards, and his kingdom was divided among his sons Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip\*.

Herod Antipas, before whom Jesus of Nazareth was led by the Jews, was a very wicked man. He had banished his lawful wife, and had taken Herodias, his half-brother Philip's wife. When John the Baptist had told him, that he had committed a great sin

\* Archelaus became tetrarch (governor) of Judea, including Idumea and Samaria; Herod Antipas tetrarch of Galilee, including Perea; and Philip (half-brother of Archelaus and Herod Antipas) tetrarch of Trachonitis, i. e., of the regions lying northwest of the Sea of Galilee. Archelaus became such a vicious tyrant, that Caesar Augustus deposed him from office, and banished him to Vienne in Gaul. In his stead, Augustus appointed a Roman by the name of Coponius with the title of procurator. Coponius was succeeded by Valerius Gratus, and Valerius Gratus by Pontius Pilate. After the banishment of Archelaus, Judea, Idumea, and Samaria were added to the tetrarchy of Syria. *Herod Antipas* was called *king* by the Jews, but he was not a king. When he petitioned Caesar Caligula for the title of king, he was deposed from office and sent into exile to Lugdunum in Gaul.

by doing that, he had John imprisoned, and finally, by request of Herodias, — beheaded. (Matt. 14, 10). When, therefore, the report of the many miracles of Jesus reached him, he became very much troubled, for he believed that John the Baptist had risen from the dead in order to revenge himself. (Luke 9, 7—9). But as about three years had passed since the death of John, and as no disaster had befallen him, he had lost all fear, and he lived on in wickedness. Though he had heard very much of Jesus of Nazareth, yet he had never met Him personally. As far as we know, Jesus never set foot into Tiberias, the city in which Herod Antipas resided.

St. Luke tells us in our text, "*And as soon as he (Pilate) knew that He (Jesus) belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad; for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him.*"

Herod Antipas became very glad when he saw Jesus, St. Luke tells us. And, indeed, he had all reasons in the world to be glad, for when he saw Jesus, he saw the Savior of the world, the God-man Redeemer of all sinful human beings, also *his* Savior and Redeemer. But Herod did not at all rejoice for these reasons. He was glad because he hoped that Jesus would perform some great miracle before Him. Herod hoped that Jesus of Nazareth would entertain him and his soldiery. Herod does not even think of it for a moment, that Jesus may decline what he wishes Him to do. Most probably Herod considered Jesus to be a juggler or enchanter, who would gladly entertain him and his company with all kinds of tricks and coarse jokes. He is persuaded that Jesus will at once comply with his request. And if Jesus had but performed a single miracle before Herod, He would have obtained His freedom, and, perhaps, even the friendship of Herod Antipas.

Surely, my beloved friends, that was a very severe temptation for Jesus. It would have been easy for Him to perform great miracles before Herod and his company, for He has all power in heaven and in earth. Only a word from His lips, and the miracles would not have been wanting. And, to be sure, Satan did everything he possibly could do to have Jesus fulfill Herod's request, and gain His freedom. Surely, Satan tried his very best to keep Jesus from going into sufferings and death for the sinful world, for if Jesus had refused to suffer and die for the sins of mankind, redemption should not have been accomplished, and Satan would

have kept his own. Jesus knew this very well, and therefore He refused to comply with Herod's request. Jesus did not want to gain His freedom. No, the time now had come, in which He wanted to sacrifice Himself for a lost sinner-world. He wished to suffer and die in order to save that which was lost.

When Jesus would not perform any miracles for the entertainment of Herod and his company, the tetrarch asked Him many questions, but Jesus did not answer them, for thus we read in our text, "*Then he (Herod) questioned with Him (Jesus) in many words; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.*" St. Luke does not tell us what accusations they brought against Jesus before Herod. Most probably they were not unlike those, which they had preferred against Him before Pontius Pilate. Herod, of course, knew that Jesus never had uttered a single word against Caesar Tiberius, and that He had even paid His taxes punctually, and that He had said to some spies of the Pharisees and Herodians, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." He knew very well that Jesus of Nazareth was not a seditious demagogue. And, we surely shall not go amiss when we surmise, that the chief priests and scribes also said to Herod, "O thou adorable King Herod Antipas, thou mighty ruler, dost thou not see that this Jesus of Nazareth is wicked and worthy of death, because He does not even respect thine exalted station; for He does not even give answer to the questions which thou hast addressed unto Him! How can it be, great and exalted King Herod, that thou canst bear such disrespect from such a perverse Galilean rabbi? Surely, great King Herod, He is guilty of death!" But Herod Antipas was wise and shrewd enough, not to take the chestnuts out of the fire for the Roman procurator. He, nevertheless, showed his contempt for Jesus by his most hateful conduct. Of this I shall now speak to you in the second place.

## 2.

When Herod Antipas realized that Jesus would not suffer Himself to act as his clown, he began to maltreat and mock Him, for so St. Luke tells us in our text, "*And Herod with his men of war set Him at naught, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves.*"



St. Luke does not say what Herod said to Jesus. He only says that he and his soldiery set Him at naught, and mocked Him, and that they finally arrayed Jesus in a gorgeous, i. e., a bright, or white, robe and sent Him back to Pontius Pilate.

Herod was not a Jew by birth, but he had accepted the Jewish religion, at least outwardly. Like his father Herod the Great, he had done that for political reasons. Having joined the Jewish church, he, of course, was in duty bound to worship in the Temple at Jerusalem, at least during the celebration of the three great festivals of the Jews (Easter, Pentecost, and Tabernacles). His father had renovated the Temple of the Jews. Most probably, therefore, the chief priests and scribes had told him, what the false witnesses had testified to before the Great Sanhedrin in Caiaphas' house. That would surely interest Herod Antipas very much. And, most probably, Herod therefore said to Jesus, "Well, Galilean rabbi, that shall indeed be a great and wonderful miracle! Thou hast refused to perform a miracle now, but I know why Thou hast refused to do so. Thou wouldst save Thy miraculous powers for that great feat at Jerusalem! O Thou great Galilean rabbi, have mercy on those poor priests, and do not destroy the great Temple while they are in it, for the poor fellows surely would be crushed to death, when those large marble slabs and pillars shall do Thy bidding! But do not forget to let us know when Thou shalt do that miracle of all miracles, for we shall all be there to witness the same. And, behold, what a grand sight that shall be to see those broken slabs and pillars rise up whole again and each take its place! Surely, we cannot miss to see that wonder of all wonders! To be sure, all the angels of heaven will be there to sing Thy praises, and all of us shall join them in singing doxologies unto Thee. Indeed, we shall crown Thee King of the Jews! And, behold, I herewith array Thee in this gorgeous robe to show unto my friend Pontius Pilate that Thou art worthy of royal honors. Oh, how glad shall we be, if Thou shalt be pleased to make us Thy humble servants, for, to serve such an exalted and wonderful king as Thou shalt be, shall be our greatest delight!"

That Herod really meant to say something of this sort, we can see from the fact that he had Jesus arrayed in a white robe. It was customary with the Romans that those men, who were seeking some political office, would put on a white robe and go from village to village, from city to city, and thus make known their intention to the people. Pilate, as a Roman, understood very well.



what Herod Antipas wished to say by having Jesus arrayed in a white robe.

And what did Jesus say? He said nothing at all. He took upon Himself all mockery and abuse without the least complaint. How was it possible that He should do it? Had He lost all of His divine power? No; it was His divine love which prompted Him to take upon Himself all this abuse and contempt. Yea, He loved His abusers and contemners. He would save them, if they only would be saved. Yea, He willingly goes into death for all, that not one of them need be lost eternally. Oh, the great love of Jesus! Had Herod only asked, how he could receive forgiveness of his sins and be eternally saved, Jesus would not have kept silent, but He would have gladly told him, what He had told Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3, 15. 16). But Herod thought not of saving his soul, nor did his soldiers give any thoughts to their poor soul's salvation.

Though Herod and his company utterly despised Jesus, yet they had to admit His faultlessness and innocence. Of this I shall speak finally.

### 3.

Herod and his company wished to show their contempt for Jesus by arraying Him in a white robe, and, indeed, all of those, who knew what Herod meant to say by this act, utterly despised Jesus; but they also all knew that even Herod and his soldiers looked upon Jesus as being found not guilty of death. Herod meant to tell Pilate, by sending Jesus unto him in a white robe, that Jesus may be a dreamer or a sage, but that He was not a rival of Caesar, and, therefore, not at all guilty of death. How wonderful indeed was the trial of Jesus! The Jews acclaim Him guilty of death, but His judges acclaim Him to be guiltless. Pontius Pilate already had said to the Jews, "*I find no fault in Him at all.*" And when Herod had Jesus arrayed in a white robe he said the very same thing. Also Judas Iscariot had cried out unto the Sanhedrists, "*I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood!*" (Matt. 27, 4). And when Jesus had been crucified, one of the malefactors cried out, "*This man hath done nothing amiss!*"

(Luke 23, 41). Thus it was. Jesus was innocent and faultless, for He had done nothing amiss.

The white robe in which He was being led from Herod to Pontius Pilate, was indeed a mark of immaculate pureness and innocence in the eyes of God and all the holy angels. Though Herod and his company intended to condemn Jesus by arraying Him in a white robe, they really put on Him the mark of righteousness, innocence, and pureness, yea, the mark of triumph.

White robes, as we see from the Holy Scriptures, always have been looked upon by God and His people as marks of innocence, pureness, and triumph. The high priest of the Jews on the Day of Atonement had to wear a *white robe* when he entered into the Most Holy of the Temple to stand between God and His people. And when God speaks of the saints in heaven, He speaks of them as of people who wear *white robes* (Revel. 7, 14); when He speaks of them as victors, He speaks of them as of people who are clothed in *white raiment* (Revel. 3, 5); when He speaks of them as of people who are worthy to walk with Him, He again speaks of them as of such who are being dressed in *white garments* (Revel. 4, 4; 7, 9). The white robe, therefore, in the eyes of the holy and righteous God, is the mark of pureness, innocence, and triumph; it is the mark of divine honor. When the holy angels therefore saw Jesus in that white robe they rejoiced, for they now knew that He, who had lain in the dust of Gethsemane, and had sweated blood, would surely win the great victory over sin, death, and the devil. And we, too, beloved friends, know that Jesus, who on account of *our* sins had to suffer and die, triumphed over all our enemies: over sin, death, and the devil; and we joyfully confess.

Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head!

Amen.

## Barabbas a Type of Sinful Mankind.

Matt. 27, 15—26a.

Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore, when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him. When he was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with this just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them.

Indeed, Herod Antipas and his soldiery had utterly despised and contemned Jesus, but they also had pronounced Him faultless, and not at all worthy of death, and, therefore, they sent the Jews with Jesus back to the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate. But, as we may infer from St. Mark's report, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews did not go back to Pontius Pilate. Why not? Had they given up all hopes of having Jesus put to death? No; they tricked the Roman governor, for they sent the multitude with Jesus to Pontius Pilate, after they had instructed the people to ask the governor to release a prisoner unto them, as was his custom at the Passover. (Mark 15, 8). Pilate now summoned the chief priests, and the elders of the Jews, and all the people before his judgment-seat, and he said to them, "Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people; and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him; no, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him." (Luke 23, 14—16).

Pontius Pilate wished to release Jesus, but he did not want to release Him without the consent of the Jewish people, for he wished to retain their good will, and, therefore, he placed a very wicked man, a seditious demagogue and a murderer beside Jesus on the Pavement, that the people might ask for the release of one of them. He, most probably, was of the opinion that only the chief priests and the elders of the Jews were seeking the death of Jesus, but not the common people. He was persuaded that, if the people should have the right to chose between the two, Jesus would go free. Pilate was not aware of the sad fact that the chief priests and the elders had moved the people to ask for the crucifixion of Jesus. The murderer and insurrectionist, whom the governor placed beside Jesus, was a certain *Barabbas*. When Pilate therefore, pointing to Barabbas and Jesus, said to the people, "*Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?*" he was persuaded that they would ask the release of Jesus. He, undoubtedly, was very much astonished when he heard the people cry out, "*Away with this man (Jesus), and release unto us Barabbas!*" (Luke 23, 18). Indeed, Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator, had been tricked by the chief priests and elders of the Jews. He hated to do what the Jews asked of him, but finally he did release unto them Barabbas. To this man Barabbas I shall now call your attention. In accordance with our text, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the subject for our present meditation shall therefore be:—

### **Barabbas a True Type of All Sinful Men.**

He was such,

1. *In regard to his guilt and condemnation;* and
2. *In regard to his pardon and liberation.*

#### **1.**

St. Matthew says in our text, "*Now at the feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.*"

The prisoner's name was *Barabbas*. The name Barabbas is a compound word. It is composed of the words "Bar" and "Abba", meaning, *son of the Father*. The parents of Barabbas were pious Jews, who regarded their son a gift of God. (Ps. 127, 3). For that reason they named him Barabbas. And, to be sure, Barabbas at one time was in deed and in truth a son of the Father in heaven,

for, by means of the holy Sacrament of Circumcision, God had accepted him as His child.

But, my dear friends, what happens today, happened then also. Many a child of pious and God-fearing parents, when he becomes a man, falls away from his God, and becomes a child of the devil. That had been the case with Barabbas. He had been weaned away from his heavenly Father, and had become an ungodly and wicked man: a criminal. He had become an insurrectionist and a murderer. The entreaties of his pious parents and other God-fearing Jews he had contemned, and rushed from sin to sin, and from iniquity to iniquity. Finally the strong arm of the Roman government had taken hold of him. He had been tried and found guilty of great crimes. He was imprisoned and waiting for the day of his execution. He had merited death by his wickedness. There cannot be the least doubt about it, that he would have been crucified with the two malefactors that were crucified with Jesus, if the people had not preferred him to Jesus of Nazareth. Barabbas was not a Roman, but a Jew as his name proves. The Romans in those days executed all criminals by means of crucifixion, unless they were Roman citizens.

This man Barabbas is a true type of all sinful men, of everyone of us, my beloved friends. As he at first was a child of the Father in heaven, so we also, in Adam and Eve, were children of God; for Adam and Eve were created without sin; they were perfectly holy and righteous when they came forth from the creative hand of God. But they did not remain what they were originally, for they fell away from God when they transgressed His Law. And after the awful Fall they were the children of Satan, who had seduced them into sin. They had disregarded the commandment of God, that they should not eat of the forbidden fruit, and thus they became sinners, and subject to death and condemnation. And their own conscience bore witness to the fact that they deserved nothing but God's wrath and displeasure, temporal death and eternal damnation for their disobedience. Instead of childlike love towards God they now had nothing but terror before God in their hearts. (Gen. 3, 10). And they indeed had all reasons in the world to fear God, for He had said unto Adam, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2, 16, 17). By the Fall all men have become sinners, for like can beget only like, as Jesus



said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." (John 3, 6). By nature all men are therefore under guilt and condemnation, and they deserve nothing but death and damnation.

From this we can see that Barabbas was indeed a true type of all men in regard to his guilt and condemnation. By nature all men are lost and condemned sinners, for all "have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," (Rom. 3, 23); and therefore they are all under God's wrath and worthy of eternal death, that is, of eternal imprisonment in hell, for it is written, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them." (Deut. 27, 26). As no man can fulfill God's Law perfectly, no one can plead sinlessness. St. John therefore truly says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1, 8). Yea, "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Eccl. 7, 20). By nature we are all "as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" in God's sight. (Is. 64, 6). Surely, my beloved friends, Barabbas was a true type of all men, as they are by nature, in regard to his guilt and condemnation. If men will only examine themselves according to the Law of God, they must admit that they have not kept a single commandment of the Lord perfectly in desires, thoughts, words, and deeds, and that therefore they are guilty before God, and deserve nothing but His just wrath, temporal death, and eternal imprisonment in hell. People who will not admit these facts are spiritually blind. They know neither the Law of God, nor their own sinfulness. What Barabbas was in the sight of his fellow-men, and in the eyes of the divine and civil law, we are by nature in the eyes of God, viz., lost and condemned sinners.

But Barabbas was not only a true type of all sinful men in regard to his guilt and condemnation, but also in regard to his pardon and liberation. And of this fact I shall now speak to you in the second place.

## 2.

Barabbas, the guilty and condemned criminal, who was awaiting his execution, was not executed, but he was pardoned and set free. Why? Had he been such a model prisoner that the Roman governor pardoned and liberated him? No; never! Because he was an exceptionally great culprit, Pontius Pilate had placed him at the side of Jesus, hoping that the Jews would never prefer this most wicked criminal, this insurrectionist and murderer, to the faultless and innocent Jesus Christ, for we read in our text, "*There-*

fore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him. When he was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with this just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them."

Why was Barabbas, the insurrectionist and murderer, pardoned and liberated? There was but *one* reason for his liberation. And which was this reason, my beloved friends? It was this one: Pontius Pilate had placed him at the side of Jesus of Nazareth, and the people preferred Barabbas to Jesus.

Barabbas had not changed in the least. He was the same wicked man. Had Pontius Pilate placed one of the two malefactors at the side of Barabbas, and left the choice to the people, Barabbas would not have been liberated. There was but one, who could save Barabbas from crucifixion, and that one was Jesus of Nazareth. Had not Jesus taken the place of Barabbas, Barabbas would have been crucified. Barabbas was pardoned and liberated, because the Jewish people preferred him to Jesus. And if it had been possible for Pontius Pilate to place the devil aside of Jesus, the Jews would have preferred him to Jesus; so great and unreasonable was their hatred for Jesus.

In regard to his pardon and liberation Barabbas was indeed a true type of all sinful men. As none but Jesus of Nazareth could save him from death, so none but Jesus can save mankind from death and damnation. Without Jesus Barabbas never would have been pardoned and liberated, and without Jesus no sinful human being ever could be pardoned by the holy and righteous God. Just

as Barabbas had done nothing towards his pardon and liberation, just so no sinful man can do anything to accomplish divine pardon and liberation from sin, death, and eternal damnation.

There are indeed many people, even in outer Christendom, who make the absurd claim that a sinful man should and could work out his own salvation. Pray, tell me, my dear friends, what would the Jewish people have said to Barabbas, if he should have made the claim that he himself had worked out his pardon and liberation? Why, they would have told him, "Barabbas, you are a liar. You know very well, that it was only by our request that you were pardoned and liberated, and if we had not decided against Jesus of Nazareth, you would have been crucified. You owe your pardon and liberation solely to Jesus of Nazareth!" And the very same thing we must tell all of those, who imagine that they themselves can work out their own soul's salvation. God can pardon and liberate a sinner only for the sake of His dear Son Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for all sinful men. Had Jesus Christ not suffered and died for the sinful world, not one sinner ever could be redeemed or reconciled unto God. Had Jesus Christ not suffered and died for sinful men, then, my beloved friend, you and I would be eternally lost, and you and I should suffer eternally for our transgressions of God's holy Law. Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, who became man in order to suffer and die for our sins, is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. (John 1, 29). "Surely, He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we are healed." (Is. 53, 4, 5). "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," than the blessed name of Jesus. (Acts 4, 12). Only the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, can cleanse us from all sin. (1 John 1, 7). Without Jesus, no sinner can ever hope to receive God's pardon. Without Jesus, no sinner ever can be liberated from sin, death, and eternal damnation. All of those people, who would be saved without Jesus, will be eternally lost.

Whether or not Barabbas was grateful unto Jesus, we do not know, for the Holy Scriptures nowhere tell us. Surely, he had all reasons in the world to be grateful unto Jesus. But we do know that many of those whom Jesus redeemed, are not grateful unto

Him. They deny Him that bought them, and bring upon themselves eternal destruction. (1 Pet. 2, 1).

O beloved friends, let us then rejoice in Jesus Christ and His work of redemption! Let us realize the awful condition from which Jesus has redeemed us! Let us be grateful unto Him, and thank Him from all our hearts! Let us daily say to Him with the Christian poet,

To Thee, Lord Jesus, thanks we give,  
Who diedst for us, that we might live,  
And through Thy holy, precious blood  
Hast made us righteous before God.

We pray Thee, O true God and Man,  
Who wast for our offenses slain:  
Save us from everlasting death,  
And cheer us, when we yield our breath.

Defend us, Lord, from sin and shame;  
Help us by Thine almighty name  
To bear our crosses patiently,  
To trust in Thy great agony, —

And thence the full assurance gain,  
That Thou wilt e'er our Friend remain,  
And not forsake us in our strife,  
Until we enter into life.

Amen.

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## The Deep Humiliation of Our Savior.

Matt. 27, 26—30.

Then released he Barabbas unto them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head.

The Apostles' Creed enumerates two states or modes of living of our dear Savior. The one we call the *state of humiliation*, and the other, the *state of exaltation*. In the state of humiliation Jesus lived while He sojourned here upon earth. In the state of exaltation He is now living. To the question: "Wherein did Christ's State of Humiliation consist?" our Catechism gives this answer: "In this, that Christ, according to His human nature, did not always, and not fully use the divine majesty communicated to His human nature." The humiliation of Jesus Christ is best observed in His Great Passion, and, therefore, St. Paul writes of Jesus: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2. 6—8).

While Jesus was upon this earth, He suffered much for sinful men, but His sufferings were not always alike. He suffered most for mankind during His Great Passion, especially during those six awful hours while He was hanging on the cross.

We have already heard of His sufferings at the hands of the servants of the high priests and the chiefs of the Jews. They did not only mock and deride Him, but they also buffeted His holy countenance. Yet, still greater were His sufferings which He endured at the hands of the cruel soldiers in the Praetorium. After Pontius Pilate, at the Jews request, had released Barabbas, who had previously been sentenced to die on the cross, he delivered the innocent and holy Jesus into the hands of the Roman soldiers, in order that He might be scourged. But they did not only scourge



Him; no, they also mocked and maltreated Him. And Jesus, the very Son of God, who had all power in heaven and in earth, suffered it. Oh, what deep humiliation! To this deep humiliation of our dear Savior I now wish to call your devout attention, my beloved friends. The theme for our present meditation shall therefore be:—

### The Deep Humiliation of Our Dear Savior.

Let me show,

1. *How His deep humiliation was brought about, and*
2. *Why He so willingly endured it.*

#### 1.

The deep humiliation of our dear Savior becomes patent in the first place by the *scourging* which He suffered, willingly suffered. The holy evangelist tells us in our text: "*Then released he (Pontius Pilate) Barabbas unto them (Jews); and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.*"

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, knew that Jesus of Nazareth was innocent of the crimes of which He was accused, for he himself had given testimony to the innocence of Jesus; but, nevertheless, he adds insult to injury, for he delivers Jesus into the hands of the soldiers to be scourged by them. Pontius Pilate had Jesus scourged before he sentenced Him to be crucified. "Scourging, as it was practised among the Romans, was a punishment so cruel that the condemned person very often succumbed to it. The scourge was made of rods or thongs armed at the extremity with pieces of bone or lead. The condemned person received the blows while fastened to a small post so as to have the back bent and the skin stretched. With the first blows, the back became raw and the blood spurted out. Sometimes death followed immediately\*." (Godet). As the Roman soldiers mocked and derided the dear Savior after the scourging had taken place, we can rightfully infer, that they scourged Him with the greatest severity. And, perhaps, Pontius Pilate had given them instructions to that very end, for according to the account before us in the Holy Scriptures, he hoped at least to awaken pity in the hearts of the more moderate people assembled before him. They all had cried out against Jesus: "Let Him be crucified! Let Him be crucified!" Pontius Pilate wished that they might withdraw this demand; he tried to have

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\* Cicero, in the orations against Verres, uses the expressions: "to be scourged to death"; "thou shalt die by the rods"; "he was carried away as dead, and died soon afterwards". (See: Keim.)

them desist in asking for the crucifixion of Jesus. That such was really the case, we can see from the account which we have by St. John. He tells us that Pontius Pilate took Jesus, after He had been scourged and robed with a purple robe by the soldiers, unto himself upon the Pavement (Gabbatha), and pointing to Jesus, he cried out to the Jews: "Behold the Man!" (John 19, 5). But he had deceived himself, for they cried out, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" When Jesus was scourged, Scripture was fulfilled, for by the mouth and pen of the Psalmist, Jesus had predicted His scourging with these words: "The plowers plowed upon My back; they made long their furrows." (Ps. 129, 3). As a piece of ground is torn up by the plow and harrow, so, beloved friends, the back of Jesus was torn by the scourging which He endured. And let us not forget that He had all power in heaven and in earth. By a word of His mouth, He could have destroyed His scourgers in the twinkling of an eye; but He suffered it all willingly. Oh, the deep humiliation that He willingly endured! Had He been a Roman citizen, then, beloved friends, it would have been a deep humiliation for Him already, for no Roman citizen could be legally scourged; but He is far more than a Roman citizen: He is the almighty Son of God, manifested in the flesh. He is the Lord of all lords, and the King of all kings. Oh, what deep humiliation! The very Son of God being scourged by wicked men! Indeed, that was deep humiliation.

But Jesus was not only greatly humiliated by the cruel scourging which He willingly endured, but also by the *blasphemous mockery and maltreatment* which He suffered; for our text tells us: "*Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head.*"

After a number of soldiers had scourged Jesus in a most cruel manner, they led Him into the Praetorium or common hall in order to mock and abuse the "King of the Jews". To abuse Jesus they considered "great sport". And that all the soldiers might share in this "great sport", they called in the whole band of soldiers, that is, about six hundred men. And when the whole band had come in, they began to mock and abuse Jesus in a most blas-

phemous and shameful manner. They stripped Him of His clothes, and put a scarlet robe, or mantle, of a soldier upon Him, which had some semblance to the robe of a king or emperor. They wanted to say to Jesus, "King Herod Antipas had Thee arrayed in a white dress, because he thought that Thou didst wish to be a king, but we know better than he: we know that Thou art already the king of the Jews, for we have heard the verdict of the Jewish people before Pontius Pilate. And, therefore, Thou must also be clothed in a royal robe, and for this very reason we have put on Thee this scarlet robe." Oh, what shameful mockery!

When Pontius Pilate had asked Jesus: "Art Thou a king then?" Jesus answered: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, **that I** should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." A king, of course, must also have a crown. Therefore some of the soldiers platted a crown of thorns and put it upon Jesus' head, they pressed it into the skin of His head until the blood ran down over His face. Oh, what wicked cruelty! Moreover, a king must also have a scepter. So some of the soldiers take a reed, or a rod, and put it into the right hand of the Savior. By doing this they wished to say to Jesus, "Jesus of Nazareth, now, indeed, Thou art a real king! Thou hast a royal robe, a crown, and a scepter." Then they kneeled down before Him, and cried out in derision: "Hail, King of the Jews!" Oh, the base and blasphemous mockery they heaped upon Jesus!

Yea, even more. They must also pay tribute unto this "King of the Jews". Therefore they spit into His holy and innocent face. They take the reed out of His hand, and with it they smite Him on His crown of thorns. Indeed, that was cruelty in its worst form. Oh, the deep humiliation which Jesus, the very Son of God, endured at the hands of those wicked and ungodly heathen soldiers! Never before, nor afterwards, was any one thus mocked and abused at the hands of sinful men. The Roman soldiers would not have dared thus to maltreat a Roman citizen. (Acts 16). And Jesus endured it all without uttering one word of complaint or threat. Surely, we cannot do otherwise than ask, Why did He suffer it all without complaint or threat? Why did Jesus, the very Son of God, permit Himself to be thus humiliated by ungodly and wicked men? That is indeed a very important question. This important question I shall now answer in the second place.

## 2.

Why Jesus permitted Himself to be so deeply humiliated, the Bible reveals to us in various places. He permitted it, because He had come out of the bosom of His dear Father into this sinful world to seek and save that which was lost, that is, to redeem all sinners from sin, death, and the power of the devil. It was His sincere will to make good the awful fall of our first parents. By the Fall, all men had fallen away from God. By their sins, men merited nothing but God's wrath and displeasure, temporal death, and eternal damnation. Had Jesus not permitted Himself to be so deeply humiliated, He could not have redeemed sinful mankind. There was but *one* way of redeeming the lost sinner-world, and this one way was by the bitter sufferings and ignominious death of the God-man Savior of the world.

When our common parents had fallen, God Himself saw no other way of redeeming them and their posterity, than by sending His only-begotten Son into this world, that He might give Himself as ransom for the sins of the world. This truth we have from the mouth of the Savior Himself, for He said unto Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3. 16. 17). Had God the Father refused to send His only-begotten Son into this world, as the Savior of sinful men, and had Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, refused to be sent in order to redeem all sinners, then, beloved friends, we never would have been redeemed. All that Jesus suffered and endured, all the blasphemous mockery, His unspeakable sufferings, and His shameful death on the accursed tree of the cross, He suffered and endured for us and all sinners. Therefore Isaiah cried out concerning Jesus: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely, He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His

mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." (Is. 53, 3—7). Yea, beloved friends, we, each one of us, must confess with the Christian poet, saying:

I many times transgressing,  
In number far surpassing  
The sand upon the coast,  
I thus the cause have given,  
That Thou with grief art riven,  
And with afflictions' scourging host.

I've done it, and deliver  
Me hand and foot forever  
Thou justly might'st to hell.  
The mocking to Thee offered,  
The scourging Thou hast suffered,  
My soul it was deserved it well.

Thou, ah! Thou hast taken on Thee  
Bonds and stripes, a cruel rod;  
Pain and scorn were heaped upon Thee,  
O Thou sinless Son of God!  
Thus didst Thou my soul deliver  
From the bonds of sin forever.

And again,

Thou hast borne the smiting only  
That my wounds might all be whole;  
Thou hast suffered, sad and lonely,  
Rest to give my weary soul;  
Yea, the curse of God enduring,  
Blessing thus to me securing.

Heartless scoffers did surround Thee,  
Treating Thee with cruel scorn,  
E'en with piercing thorns they crowned Thee;  
All disgrace Thou, Lord, hast borne,  
That as Thine Thou mightest own me,  
And with heavenly glory crown me.

Thou hast suffered great affliction,  
And hast borne it patiently,  
Even death by crucifixion,  
That Thou might'st atone for me;  
Thou didst choose to be tormented,  
That my doom should be prevented.

Indeed, all that our dear Savior endured by being cruelly scourged, wickedly abused, and blasphemously mocked, He endured for us and all sinful men, in order to save us from sin, death, and



damnation. He suffered Himself to be arrayed in an old soldier's mantle, that we might be clothed in His dress of righteousness, which covers all our sins in the sight of God. He suffered Himself to be crowned with a crown of thorns, that we might receive the crown of glory in heaven. He permitted those wicked soldiers to place into His right hand a reed as a scepter, so that we might become a royal priesthood and reign with Him forever. His deep humiliation brings unto us and all true believers in Him glorious exaltation. We can even sing today what we sung at Christmas:

He lays aside His power divine,  
A servant's form doth take,  
In want and lowness He doth pine  
Who heaven and earth did make.

He serves, that I a lord may be;  
A great exchange, indeed!  
Could Jesus' love do more for me,  
To help me in my need?

That is the correct answer to the important question, Why did Jesus permit Himself to be so deeply humiliated? Let us daily think of His divine love which He manifested forth in His deep humiliation for our exaltation, and gratefully say to Him with all our heart:

Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,  
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

Amen.

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## The Final Trial of Jesus Before Pontius Pilate.

John 19, 4—16a.

Pilate, therefore, went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man! When the chief priests, therefore, and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him! Pilate saith unto them, Take ye Him, and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him. The Jews answered him, We have a Law, and by our Law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. When Pilate, therefore, heard that saying, he was the more afraid, and went again into the judgment-hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art Thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto Him, Speakest Thou not unto me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him. But the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this Man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar. When Pilate, therefore, heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour; and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him! Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified.

During our last Lenten service we heard that Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, had Jesus scourged, and that he even permitted the soldiers to mock and abuse Him.

Pontius Pilate was a man whom God had endowed with great mental abilities. He did not at all lack the qualities of a judge, as far as knowledge was concerned, for he knew the laws very well. He was also a man with a sense of keen observation, and, therefore, knew from the very beginning of the trial of Jesus, that the Jews had no valid reasons to ask for His death, that they only had arraigned Him before his tribunal because of envy. Yes, Pontius Pilate had viewed the whole situation correctly. But he had one great fault. Which? He was not just in his dealings as a judge. He had a very wide conscience. It was immaterial to him whether or not justice was being meted out to an accused person. He was

selfish, and looked more to his own, than to his neighbor's welfare. A judge with a well developed sense of justice will at all times judge righteously. Notwithstanding the fact that Pontius Pilate had a good knowledge of the law, he, nevertheless, would often act contrary to it, if it was to his personal advantage to do so. He was a shrewd, but unjust judge, as we can see from the whole trial of Jesus of Nazareth.

Because he was an unjust judge, he also was a veritable coward. He knew that it was contrary to the Roman law to have an innocent person scourged and abused, but he, nevertheless, had Jesus scourged, yea, he even permitted the soldiers to deride and abuse Him. The Jews knew, that such a man would not withstand them to the very end; they were confident that Pontius Pilate would finally do their bidding, and sentence Jesus to be crucified. And they were not at all mistaken, as we see from our text. Let us, then, my beloved friends, now direct our Lenten meditation to:—

#### The Final Trial of Jesus Before Pontius Pilate.

Let us consider,

1. *That Pontius Pilate could find no fault in Jesus, but*
2. *That he, nevertheless, sentenced Him to be crucified.*

##### 1.

St. John tells us in our text: "*Pilate, therefore, went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man!*"

It was the day of the preparation of the Passover, and for this reason the Jews would not go into the Praetorium or judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled by going into the house of a Gentile, but that they might eat the Passover \*. (John 18, 28). There—

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\* "They wanted to be Levitically clean for the eating of the *chagigah*, or sacrifice, of the double festival. For the word Passover is applied not only to the meal of the 14th of Nisan, but to all the sacrificial meals that were prescribed for the seven days of the festival, Deut. 16, 2, 3; 2 Chron. 30, 22. But the command of God did not go so far as to prohibit the entering into the house of a Gentile at this time. That was one of the traditions of the elders which the Jews observed with such strictness." (Kretzmann, Pop. Com., p. 511.)

fore the governor brought Jesus out on the Pavement\*. Jesus appeared in the purple robe which the soldiers had put on Him, and with the crown of thorns upon His head. Pilate, most probably, had Jesus brought out on the Pavement, because he hoped that the murderous and bloodthirsty Jews might be moved to pity, when they should see the woeful and pitiful condition of Jesus. That such was his hope, we can see from the words of Pilate, for he said to the Jews, pointing to Jesus: "*Behold the Man!*" He wished to say, "Look! Behold this Jesus of Nazareth! See what condition He is in! Have compassion upon your King! See how the blood trickles down from His wounded head! Go home, and do not ask me to have Him crucified, for I find no fault in Him; He is altogether faultless and innocent, and I cannot sentence Him to be crucified!"

But, my dear friends, Pontius Pilate had deceived himself when he supposed that those bloodthirsty and murderous Jews would desist from asking for the crucifixion of Jesus. The woeful and pitiful sight which they beheld, only inflamed their passions the more, and they cried out again and again: "Crucify Him!" St. John tells us in our text: "*When the chief priests, therefore, and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him! Pilate saith unto them, Take ye Him, and crucify Him; for I find no fault in Him.*" Pilate, of course, knew very well, that they had no power to execute capital punishment upon any person, for this power the Roman emperor had taken away from them. When Pilate, therefore, said unto them: "Take ye Him, and crucify Him; for I find no fault in Him," he wished to say, "I dare you to crucify Jesus of Nazareth! Have you forgotten that I, and I alone, have power to crucify Him, and power to release Him?" Of course, all the Jews knew that they did not have the power to crucify Jesus, otherwise they would not have asked Pontius Pilate to sentence Jesus to be crucified. And when Pilate told them time and again, that he could find no fault in Jesus, that Jesus was really innocent and not at all deserving of death, he spoke the truth, as all the Jews knew.

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\* "The name *lithostroton*, signifies: *place paved with stones*. Before the Praetorium there was one of the pavements of mosaic, on which the Roman magistrates had the custom of placing their judgment-seats. The Aramaean name *Gabbatha* is not the translation of the preceding; it is borrowed from the character of the place. It signifies: *eminence, hill*." (Godet, Gospel of St. John, II, p. 378.)

If Pontius Pilate had been a *just* judge he would not only have told the Jews: "*I find no fault in Him;*" but he would also have told them, "I release Jesus of Nazareth. Dare not to lay your hands upon Him again. Let Him depart in peace. Go home and celebrate the Passover, and keep your peace." But Pontius Pilate was not a just judge. He did not say anything to that effect. No; though he repeatedly confessed that Jesus was faultless, he, nevertheless, condemned Him to be crucified. How was that possible? How could Pontius Pilate do that? Why he sentenced Jesus to be crucified, we shall now hear in the second place.

## 2.

Pontius Pilate had repeatedly confessed the innocence and faultlessness of Jesus, and yet, beloved friends, he condemned Him to be nailed to the accursed tree of the cross. Surely, no one would expect a just judge to do that. But what no just judge would have done, Pontius Pilate did; for St. John tells us in our text: "*Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified.*" And all the other evangelists tell us the same. (See: Matt. 27, 26; Mark 15, 15; Luke 23, 24.)

Did Pontius Pilate, then, have no conscience at all? Indeed, he had a conscience, for all men have a conscience. Yes, Pontius Pilate had a conscience. His repeated efforts to release Jesus, prove this. He did not only say to the Jews: "*Behold the Man! . . . Take ye Him, and crucify Him; for I find no fault in Him;*" but St. John tells us furthermore in our text: "*The Jews answered him, We have a Law, and by our Law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. When Pilate, therefore, heard that saying, he was more afraid, and went again into the judgment-hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art Thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto Him, Speakest Thou not unto me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath greater sin. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him.*" From this conversation of Pontius Pilate with Jesus, we can see that he had a conscience indeed; and his conscience did its duty, for it admonished him not to sentence an innocent person to die upon the accursed tree of the cross. But Pontius Pilate did not listen to his conscience; he heeded not its warnings. When the Jews said to him: "*If thou let this Man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: who-*



*scorer maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar."* that is to say, "If thou wilt release Jesus of Nazareth, then we will accuse thee at the tribunal of the emperor, as one who sides with a seditious person, and thou shalt be dismissed from thy office, for the emperor will not be dethroned by this Nazarene rebel;" then Pontius Pilate suppressed the voice of his conscience, and acted contrary to its bidding. He did not want to lose "his job" on account of Jesus of Nazareth. He told his conscience, that it should be much better for him to sentence Jesus to die upon the cross, even though He were faultless, than that he should be impeached by the Jews, and dismissed from office by the Roman emperor.

From this it is evident, my beloved friends, that Pontius Pilate was not a just judge, and, therefore, he was a coward. Had he been a just judge, he would have done what the Roman procurator Felix did, when the murderous Jews tried to kill St. Paul. Felix protected him from his bloodthirsty enemies. (Acts 24, 23).

When Pontius Pilate pronounced the death-sentence upon Jesus of Nazareth, he, at the same time, also signed his own death-sentence. All those that wrong others, in order to save themselves, shall not escape the just punishment of the righteous God. An unjust judge before others shall not go unpunished. (Prov. 17, 15). Pontius Pilate did not escape just punishment. By pronouncing the death-sentence upon Jesus, in order to retain his office, he lost it. Shortly afterwards he was dismissed from office by the emperor, and banished. In his banishment he was without friends, and soon died. (Matt. 16, 25). Nor did the murderous Jews escape the just punishment of God. As Jesus had told Pilate, they had greater sin than he, because they knew better. Blasphemously they had cried out unto the governor against Jesus: "His blood be upon us and our children!" (Matt. 27, 25). And His blood soon came upon them and their children, when their city and country was destroyed by the Romans under Titus, and many of them lost their lives, and the rest were sold as slaves. The destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews into all parts of the world, was the severest punishment which God inflicted upon any people.

That *Pontius Pilate*, the Roman governor, who was a heathen man, sentenced Jesus to be crucified, we can somewhat understand; but that *God*, the Father of Jesus Christ, should permit this travesty upon justice, that He should permit an unjust judge to sentence His only-begotten Son to be crucified, we never should be

able to understand, if God Himself had not given unto us the reasons for it in His holy Word.

From the Word of God we learn that the Father in heaven did not only *permit* the crucifixion of His only-begotten Son, but that He even *willed* it. That this is true, we see from our text, for when Jesus gave no answers to some of Pilate's questions, and when Pilate then said unto Him: "*Speakest Thou not unto me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee?*" Jesus said unto him: "*Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above.*" Who was it, then, beloved friends, by whose authority Pontius Pilate had received this power? None other than God Himself. It is God who has vested the government with the power to execute capital punishment, and for this reason St. Paul wrote to the Roman Christians: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." (Romans 13, 1).

It is certainly true, however, my beloved friends, that God gave no government the power to punish an innocent and faultless person, but only an evildoer. It is the duty of every government to protect the innocent. How, then, could Jesus truthfully say unto Pontius Pilate, that the power to crucify Him had been delegated unto him from above? The correct answer to this question we find in the Bible. Jesus was all men's *substitute*, as St. Paul writes 2 Corinthians 5, 21, saying: "God made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." That the Father would make His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ to be sin for all sinners, in order that they might be redeemed, Isaiah already had foretold, when he cried out: "The Lord hath laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all." When Jesus stood before the tribunal of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, He stood before him as all men's substitute, and for that reason the heavenly Father did not only *permit*, but even *willed* His crucifixion. (Acts 2, 23). Indeed, God the Father Himself pronounced the death-sentence upon Jesus, when Pontius Pilate sentenced Him to be crucified, and He did it, because Jesus was all men's substitute.

Had the heavenly Father not permitted Pontius Pilate to pronounce the death-sentence upon Jesus, then we should not have been redeemed. God gave His only-begotten Son into sufferings and death, that all sinners, who believe in Him, may not perish.

but have everlasting life. (John 3, 16). This Gospel-truth explains the great mystery, *why* God the Father permitted His Son to be judged and condemned by an unjust judge. 'Tis true, therefore, what we have sung,

O Lamb of God, most holy!  
Upon the cursed tree slain;  
E'er patient, meek, and lowly,  
Though heaped with hate and disdain;  
All sins Thou borest for us,  
Else had despair reigned o'er us!

Indeed, beloved friends, we should truly sorrow over our sins, because on their account Jesus Christ had to suffer and die on the cross, but we should also rejoice with all our heart, that He in love gave Himself for us, so that we might be eternally saved. As long as we live, let us gratefully acknowledge His great love, and never weary in saying unto Him, who died for us that we might live,

Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,  
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee!

That we may always thus rejoice in the salvation which Jesus Christ has wrought for us by His bitter sufferings and ignominious death upon the accursed tree of the cross, God grant for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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## Our Savior on His Way from the Praetorium to Calvary.

John 19, 16b. 17.

And they (the soldiers) took Jesus, and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgatha.

The powers of darkness had finally won out; the Jews had been victorious over the arrogant and proud Roman governor; for Pontius Pilate, after he had made several futile attempts to set Jesus free, finally delivered Him to be crucified. The greatest travesty upon justice recorded in the annals of history, had been perpetrated, for the faultless and innocent Jesus of Nazareth had been condemned to die on the accursed tree of the cross.

The whole trial of Jesus before Pontius Pilate had lasted somewhat over two hours. Abiding by the custom of Oriental judges, Pontius Pilate had opened the court-session at about six o'clock in the morning. Before the Roman governor pronounced the fatal sentence upon Jesus, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be upon us and our children. Then Pontius Pilate released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus unto them that He should be crucified.

It was the day of the preparation of the Passover, and, therefore, the Jews were in great haste to have the death-sentence executed at once. The Roman soldiers took from Jesus the purple robe, and put on Him His own clothes, and then they led Him away from the Praetorium to the place of crucifixion, which was called Golgatha, because of its shape; it looked like a skull. This fact is recorded in our text. Let us, then, now direct our present meditation to the scenes described in our text by St. John. The theme for our discourse shall therefore be:—

**Our Dear Savior on His Way from the Praetorium to Calvary.**

Let me show,

1. *That it was a sorrowful way for our Savior.*
2. *Why He willingly went forth, bearing His cross.*

1.

The whole sojourn of our dear Savior here upon earth was nothing but a life of great sorrows and sufferings. Hardly had He been born in that lowly stable at Bethlehem, when He was

obliged to flee to Egypt, in order to escape the murderous hands of King Herod the Great. And from that very time to the day of His ignominious death upon the cross, He suffered and endured anguish and pain. Especially great were His sufferings in the last days of His earthly career. We have already seen Him in great anguish in the garden of Gethsemane, where His sweat was like drops of blood falling down to the ground. We have also beheld His sufferings before the Sanhedrists, before Pontius Pilate, before King Herod Antipas, and at the hands of the Jewish rabble and Roman soldiers. Yea, indeed, Jesus was a man of sorrows and sufferings. No one ever suffered and endured what He endured and suffered, for He suffered and endured everything for us and all sinful men. It is true what Isaiah prophesied of Him: "Surely, He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

St. John tells us in our text: "*And they took Jesus, and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgatha.*"

All those that were sentenced to die on the cross were obliged to carry their own cross. At least, this was the rule whenever the Romans led anyone out to the place of crucifixion. Jesus also had to carry His cross, as we see from our text. Those who were led out to the place of crucifixion also had to carry a tablet about their neck, upon which the cause of their crucifixion was inscribed. The carrying of this tablet was considered very odious by all the people. Even Jesus was not excepted from this humility. After the person had been nailed to the cross, the tablet would be fastened to the cross above the head of the crucified one.

If we should go to the city of Jerusalem, my beloved friends, we would be shown a very narrow street in the northern part of the city, which to this day is known as the *via dolorosa*, that is, the *sorrowful way*. This narrow street is about one mile long. Most probably it was this street upon which Jesus was led out from the Praetorium to Calvary, bearing His cross. At His sides there were two malefactors, who were also led out to the place of the skull or Golgatha, in order to be crucified, each one bearing his cross. A vast multitude follows them, jeering and cursing them, especially jeering and cursing Jesus of Nazareth. What a sight!



The very same people, who a few days before had saluted Jesus of Nazareth as their king, shouting at the very top of their voices: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" (Matt. 21, 9), lead Him out to Golgatha to crucify Him! The very same people, who a few days before, when Jesus came to Jerusalem, had spread their garments in His way, and who had cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in His way, now follow Him to the place of the skull, cursing and abusing Him, yea, rejoicing with all their hearts, that He is now to be put out of this world! "Behold the Man!" Pontius Pilate had cried out, when Jesus was standing before the whole people on the Pavement, arrayed in an old soldier's mantle and with the crown of thorns upon His head. "Behold the Man!" thus we also must cry out, as we see the Savior of the world wending His way out to Calvary, bleeding from many wounds and carrying His cross, while He is being lashed by the cruel soldiers. Even as Isaac about two thousand years before had to carry the wood, which his father wished to use for his sacrifice, so Jesus, whose prototype Isaac was, had to bear the accursed tree of the cross, upon which He was to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. And like a lamb, which is led to the slaughter-house, Jesus goes His sorrowful way without a word of complaint.

He who wends His way to Calvary is the very Son of God, though He goes along the *via dolorosa*, bearing His cross to the place of His crucifixion. It is He, who made all things; who healed the sick; who cast out demons; who stilled the tempest; who gave unto the blind their sight, and unto the deaf their hearing, yea, who even raised up the dead from their tombs. By one word of His mouth He could have destroyed His enemies and tormentors, and could have cast them down into the eternal abyss of hell, if He had so willed it.

Why, then, beloved friends, did He willingly go His way from the Praetorium to Calvary? This important question I shall now answer in the second place.

## 2.

Why Jesus Christ, our dear Savior, willingly went forth to Calvary in order to lay down His life, the Holy Scriptures tell us. St. Paul writes by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though

God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5, 19—21). These words of the holy apostle tell us *why* Jesus willingly went forth to Calvary. He went forth as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. (John 1, 29). One of the early church fathers has well said that all the sins of all men were laden on the back of Jesus when He went forth from the Praetorium to Calvary. Thus it was. Not the cross itself was so heavy for Him to bear while He was on His way to Calvary, but what made that cross so heavy were our sins, which were embodied in that cross. When Jesus went forth to Calvary, bearing His cross, He carried our burdens, our sins and iniquities. Because mankind had gone astray from the way which God Himself had pointed out as the way leading to Him, — because all men had sinned, Jesus had to go forth on the *via dolorosa*, bearing His cross. St. Mark tells us, that the weight was too heavy, that the crucifiers of Jesus feared that He might succumb under the heavy weight, and that they therefore compelled a certain man by the name of Simon to help Him bear it. God the Father had placed upon our Savior our sins, for that is what St. Paul means when he says, that He made Jesus to be sin for us. When Jesus wended His way on the *via dolorosa* from the Praetorium to Calvary, He was loaded down with our sins. Everyone of us must confess with the Christian poet and say: —

Hail, Thou agonizing Savior,  
Bearer of our sin and shame!  
By Thy merits we find favor:  
Life is given through Thy name.

Had Jesus not willingly gone forth to Calvary in order to save us and all sinners, no one would have been able to make Him go forth. All the Jews and Romans, yea, all mankind, could not have compelled Him to do it, for He had all power in heaven and in earth, even then. He went forth willingly; He went forth His way to Calvary to save that which was lost. It is indeed true what we have sung: —

A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth,  
The guilt of all men bearing;  
'Tis laden with the sin of earth,  
None else the burden sharing.  
It goes its way, grows weak and faint,  
To slaughter led without complaint,

Its spotless life to offer;  
Bears shame, and stripes, and wounds, and death,  
Anguish and mockery, and saith,  
“Willing all this I suffer.”

This Lamb is Christ, the soul’s great Friend  
And everlasting Savior;  
Him, Him God chose, sin’s reign to end  
And bring us to His favor.  
“Go forth, My Son!” He said, “and bail  
The children, who are doomed to hell  
But for Thine intercession.  
The punishment is great, and dread  
The wrath, but Thou Thy blood shalt shed,  
And save them from perdition.”

“Yea, Father, yea, most willingly  
I’ll bear what Thou commandest;  
My will conforms to Thy decree,  
I do what Thou demandest.”

Indeed, my most beloved friends, ’twas nothing but love, divine love, which prompted our dear Savior to go His sorrowful way from the Praetorium to Calvary! Indeed, ’twas nothing but love, divine love, which prompted Him to go up to Calvary to sacrifice Himself for the sins of all mankind! Indeed, ’twas nothing but love, divine love, which prompted Him to die for us, that we might live! Not all the gold, silver, diamonds, and most precious jewels of this world could have induced Him to leave the bosom of His dear Father, the happiness and bliss of heaven, and come down into this sinner-world to suffer and die for sinful mankind. No, there was but one thing, one thing only, which He wished to accomplish, and this one thing was the *redemption of all sinners*. A Christian hymnologist has truly said, and we say with him:—

Naught, naught, dear Lord, could move Thee  
To leave Thy rightful place  
Save love, for which I love Thee;  
A love that could embrace  
A world where sorrow dwelleth,  
Which sin and suffering fill,  
More than the tongue e’er telleth; —  
Yet Thou couldst love it still!

As often as we ask, Why did our dear Savior wend His way to Calvary? we can find but one correct answer, viz., Because He loved us so. And as we behold Him on His sorrowful way, He cries out unto us, “Sinners, see how I love you! Acknowledge My

love, and despise it not! Accept Me as your loving Savior and Redeemer! See, how I must suffer for you in order that you need not suffer in the eternal abyss of hell! Can you doubt My love towards you? Can you really reject Me? Can you really live on in sin willfully, though you know that on its account I must now die on the accursed tree of the cross on Calvary? Every one of you that despises My love, and accepts Me not as His one and only Savior, shall bring upon himself swift destruction!" (2 Pet. 2, 1).

And what do you answer Him, my beloved friend? Do you say with all your heart: "I believe that Thou, Lord Jesus, art my Savior indeed. I believe that Thou hast purchased and won me from my sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with Thy holy and precious blood, and with Thy innocent suffering and death, that I may be Thine own, and live under Thee in Thy kingdom, and serve Thee in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. I believe that Thou wilt be at my side whenever I must make my last journey, my journey through the valley of the shadow of death"! My friend, blessed, forever blessed shall you be, if you can truthfully speak thus to your Redeemer, for He will neither leave, nor forsake you, when all your other friends must leave and forsake you. He will then take you up into His arms and take you into the heavenly mansions not made with hands. Yea, blessed, forever blessed, all true believers in Jesus Christ! Indeed, they can joyfully cry out with St. Paul: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 15, 55, 57). They can say with the Christian poet:—

To others death seems dark and grim,  
But not, Thou Life of life, to me,  
I know Thou ne'er forsakest him  
Whose heart and spirit rest in Thee.  
Oh! who would fear his journey's close,  
If from dark woods and lurking foes  
He then find safety and release?  
Nay, rather, with a joyful heart  
From this dark region I depart  
To Thy eternal light and peace.

May God grant this for the sake of His dear Son Jesus Christ.

Amen.

## Simon, the Cross-bearer from Cyrene.

Mark 15, 21.

And they compel one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross.

We have seen Jesus, the Lamb of God, bearing His cross on the *via dolorosa*. We have heard, why He went forth, bearing the heavy burden. While we were looking at our dear Savior, as He went His way from the Praetorium to Calvary, we noticed that His blood flowed from many wounds, which were made upon His back by the awful scourge and the crown of thorns upon His head. We beheld a vast multitude of half-crazed people following Him and the two malefactors that were led out with Him to the Place of the Skull, or Golgatha. But we did not see anyone, that assisted Jesus in carrying the heavy beam. No, we only heard the mob deriding and cursing the faultless and innocent Cross-bearer from Nazareth, and we saw how cruel soldiers lashed Him in order to spur Him on in the sorrowful way. Indeed, a sad sight it was, which we beheld!

Among the vast multitude not one was found who volunteered to assist Jesus. Perhaps the pious women, who had followed Him and His disciples from Galilee to the capital city of the Jews, would have gladly assisted Him, but, of course, they could not, for the Jewish rabble and the Roman soldiers would not have permitted them to do so, if they had offered help to the suffering Savior of the world.

Jesus had been under great physical, mental, and spiritual strain during the last days, and especially the last twelve hours. The agony of Gethsemane, the capture, the trial before the Sanhedrists, before Herod Antipas, and Pontius Pilate, the lack of rest during the night, the bloody scourging which He had just been compelled to endure, all this now combined to sap His strength. Since the eating of the Passover He had received no refreshments whatever. It was no wonder, therefore, that He broke down under the heavy weight, when He had arrived at the foot of Calvary's hill. The soldiers lashed Him, but that gave Him no strength. According to the Roman law, they were permitted to press anybody into service to help one sentenced to be crucified to bear his cross, if that should become necessary. Just at this mo-



ment a man came from the country, going to the city. He was a stranger. Perhaps he gave signs of displeasure at the awful scenes which he beheld. The soldiers called him, and told him to help Jesus bear His cross up the hill, but he refused to do so. Then they compelled him to do as they had bidden him to do. This man's name was Simon. He had come from Cyrene in Africa to celebrate the Passover at Jerusalem. Of this man the holy evangelist tells us in our text. By the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with our text, let me now direct your attention to:—

**Simon, the Cross-bearer from Cyrene.**

We learn from our text,

1. *That he was compelled to help Jesus bear His cross, and*
2. *That the Lord blessed him above all that he could ask or think.*

**1.**

St. Mark tells us in our text: "*And they compel one Simon, a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear His cross.*"

This man Simon was a Jew by birth. His home was at Cyrene in the northern part of Africa. He had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Passover. When he left his home for the capital city of the Jews, he had not the least idea of that which was to transpire there during the Passover-week.

St. Mark says that Simon of Cyrene came out of the country, when Jesus was led out to Calvary, the place of His crucifixion. Simon, most probably, had spent the night with some of his friends or relatives in the country. That is what many pilgrims were obliged to do during the Passover festivities, for millions of Jews came to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover, and many of them could not find lodgings in the city, and, therefore, they had to stay with some friends or relatives living near Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples also had to spend the nights of the pre-festival period at Bethany with some of their friends. (Matt. 21. 17; Mark 11, 11). As Simon of Cyrene was on his way to the city, he came upon the mob which was leading Jesus and the two malefactors out to the Place of the Skull, or Calvary, to be crucified. When he beheld the vast multitude of people, he at once knew what it all meant, for he saw that three men were each bearing a cross. While he yet looks on, he notices that one of them sinks down upon his knees into the dust of the road at the foot of Cal-

vary's hill. He is shocked, and he hastens on his way to get away from the awful and pitiful scene, as fast as he possibly can do. The soldiers notice him, and they perceive at once that the stranger meeting them is not willing to fall in line, and they suppose that he might be one of Jesus' disciples, or at least, a friend of the Galilean. They call Simon, but he hastens on, and pays no attention to their calling. Some ruffians stop Simon and bring him to the soldiers. He is told to help Jesus bear His cross, but the Cyrenian refuses to obey them. So they compel him to help Jesus. They lay one part of the cross upon his shoulder and he must bear it up the hill. And we can be quite sure that Simon was mocked and abused, the same as Jesus. Whether or not Simon knew Jesus of Nazareth, we cannot tell, as St. Mark does not say anything about it. Some commentators say that Simon of Cyrene knew Jesus, and that he even was one of His disciples, though secretly, as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, but we have no assurance whatever, that this was the fact. Jesus may have been a total stranger to Simon up to this time.

This man Simon is a type of all true Christians in his cross-bearing. Every true Christian must be a cross-bearer, for Jesus Himself said: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14, 27). And again He said: "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." (Matt. 10, 38). Yea, every true Christian must take his cross upon himself, and follow Jesus.

But, my beloved friends, what does it mean, to bear the cross of Jesus? Many people do not at all know what it means. By bearing the cross of Jesus nothing else than the suffering is meant, which true Christians must endure on account of Jesus, His Word, and His Church.

When, for example, a person transgresses the civil laws, and for that reason is punished, he is not at all suffering for Jesus' sake, nor is he bearing the cross of Jesus. Or if a person has ruined his physical health by an immoral life, by sinful living, and if he must suffer much on account of it, he is by no means bearing the cross of Jesus, nor is he then suffering for the sake of Jesus. Or if parents do not bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and, therefore, must endure all kinds of indignities and sufferings in their old age, because they have reared ungodly and wicked children, then, beloved friends, such parents are not suffering for Jesus' sake, nor are they bearing His

cross. No, all such people are suffering on account of their sins. Even though they be believing Christians, they, nevertheless, are suffering on account of their sins.

Bearing the cross of Jesus means, to suffer for Jesus' sake. All sufferings, mental and physical sufferings, which Christians endure on account of their Christian faith, are sufferings for the sake of Jesus. The ungodly and wicked people hate Jesus, His Word, and His disciples, and because of their hatred for Jesus and all of His people, they mock, abuse, and even persecute the true Christians. If we read the Holy Scriptures and the history of the Church, we find, that many Christians at all times were bitterly hated, abused, and persecuted by the worldlings and false Christians. Just think of the bloody persecutions of the Christians during the first three centuries of the Christian era. Thousands upon thousands of Christians had to give their lives for being disciples of Jesus Christ. All Christian martyrs suffered death for Jesus Christ's sake, on account of their Christian faith and Christian principles. And even nowadays, though we Christians are not killed on account of our Christian faith, because the ungodly lack the civil power to take our lives, we are, nevertheless, hated, and we must suffer all kinds of indignities and minor persecutions because we are disciples of Jesus. All these sufferings are sufferings for Jesus' sake, and when we endure them, we bear His cross.

But, perhaps, some of you will say, "Well, pastor, I cannot say, that the worldlings hate and annoy me, and I am a Christian nevertheless." My dear friend, if that is true, then, believe me, you are not a true Christian at all. If the worldlings still love you, and if they are your good friends, then there is something altogether wrong with your Christianity. And the fault is with you, because you are a wishy-washy Christian, that is, you are a sham-Christian. Just profess Christian principles, confess Jesus and His Word, defend His Church, and shun the ungodly and wicked ways of the world, and you will soon realize that the worldlings hate you. Just confess Jesus boldly, and renounce the sinful ways of this ungodly and wicked world, and you will soon find out that the worldlings will be against you, and that they will try to do all they possibly can against you: yea, you will soon find out that Jesus spoke the whole truth, when He said unto His disciples: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that

I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me." (John 18, 19—21). And St. John writes unto his fellow-Christians: "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." (1 John 3, 13). He wishes to tell them, that it is self-evident that the ungodly and wicked world, the worldlings, should hate them, for they cannot do otherwise.

Of course, my dear fellow-Christians, it is not at all pleasing to our own flesh and blood, to our old Adam, if we are hated and despised, yea, even persecuted, by the worldlings, but if we would be true disciples of Jesus, we must, nevertheless, suffer it, and if we do, we shall not regret it some day, for the bearing of Jesus' cross, or the sufferings for His sake, are not in vain. The Lord Jesus will bless us for it above all that we can ask or think, as we learn from our text. Of this I shall now speak to you in the second place.

## 2.

Many people do not believe that the bearing of Jesus' cross shall bring blessings unto those, who bear it. Even people that would be true Christians very often deny that there is a blessing in suffering for Jesus' sake. They will say, "How can that be a blessing for us, if we must be hated and despised, yea, even persecuted, for the sake of Jesus Christ?" And for this very reason many will leave Jesus and His Church, and unite with the worldlings. They cannot be happy, unless they have the friendship of the worldlings. It hurts them, if the worldlings will not associate with them. And for this reason they fall away from the Lord, His Word, and His Church. Oh, how sad! All those, who will not suffer for Jesus' sake, who are not willing to bear His cross, cannot be His disciples, and they shall be eternally lost.

That there is a blessing, a great blessing, in bearing the cross of Jesus, we learn from our text. Simon of Cyrene was blessed above all that he could ask or think. He became a Christian. If he had not come into contact with Jesus, he, perhaps, never would have become one of His disciples. The holy evangelist tells us in our text, that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Alexander and Rufus must have been known as true disciples of Jesus Christ at the time St. Mark wrote his Gospel. Most probably Simon of Cyrene became converted under the cross of Jesus.



Jesus must have made a salutary impression upon him by His wonderful conduct. And we doubt not that, when Simon saw the tablet about Jesus' neck with the inscription: "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS", he made inquiries concerning Him, for every devout Jew knew what that phrase meant, viz., the promised Messiah. And we cannot doubt in the least that he now became very much interested in Jesus, and tried to find out all he possibly could about Him. And when he heard the intercession of Jesus for His crucifiers and enemies, and heard everything which Jesus spoke while He was hanging upon the cross, and when he saw the great darkness, lasting three full hours, and the great earthquake, he undoubtedly became convinced, that this Jesus of Nazareth was in deed and in truth the Messiah, that the Roman centurion had spoken the truth when he called out: "Truly, this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15, 39). He went home and told his own people, what he had learned on Calvary's hill, how he had found Messiah, and how he had been blessed above all that he could ask or think. And when his people heard what he had to say about Jesus, when they heard the Gospel out of his mouth, they also believed in Jesus, and became His disciples. (Romans 16, 13; Acts 19, 33).

All those who bear the cross of Jesus, who suffer for His sake, shall be abundantly blessed, blessed above all that they can even ask or understand. That this is true, we see from many passages of the Holy Scriptures. St. Peter writes: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Pet. 4, 12, 13). St. Paul writes: "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." And again: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (2 Tim. 2, 11, 12; Rom. 8, 18). Yea, Jesus Himself said unto His disciples: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matt. 5, 11, 12).

Oh, blessed all they that bear the cross of Jesus, that suffer



for His sake! They shall be blessed in time and in eternity. While they are here upon earth, they have a good conscience in all things, and in the life to come a blessed inheritance is awaiting them. Jesus Himself gave them this precious promise: "For great is your reward in heaven." Whatsoever He promises, He will also give, for He cannot lie; His Word is right. (Ps. 33. 4). All those who trust the promise of their dear Savior shall rejoice, when He permits them to bear His cross after Him. There cannot be the least doubt about it, that Simon of Cyrene afterwards considered it a great honor, that he had been permitted by Jesus to help Him bear His cross. Yea, all true Christians are not ashamed to take upon themselves the cross of Jesus, and they joyfully exclaim with a Christian hymnologist, saying: —

In the cross of Christ I glory,  
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'ertake me,  
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,  
Never shall the cross forsake me:  
Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

When the sun of bliss is beaming  
Light and love upon my way,  
From the cross the radiance streaming  
Adds new luster to the day.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,  
By the cross are sanctified;  
Peace is there that knows no measure,  
Joys that through all time abide.

Amen.

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## Jesus Rebuking the Daughters of Jerusalem.

Luke 23, 27—31.

And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

In our last Lenten service we saw how the Savior of the sinful world sank down into the dust of the highway leading to Mount Calvary. We saw how cruel men lashed Him in order to spur Him on to His place of crucifixion. But Jesus could no longer carry the heavy cross, and a man by the name of Simon, who had come from Cyrene in Africa to celebrate the Passover at Jerusalem, and who came out of the country and was on his way to the city, was compelled to help Him carry the heavy burden. It was an awful sight to behold. The yells and curses of the rabble filled the air round about. As it often occurs during such tumults of passion, so it occurred here: the women began to weep and lament. Indeed, the sight they beheld was so sorrowful, that anyone having human feelings gave vent to groans, and shed tears. These women of Jerusalem pitied Jesus and, therefore, they bewailed and lamented Him.

What did Jesus do when He heard their groans and saw their tears? Did He not receive some consolation from the fact that they bewailed and lamented Him? Did He not bless them for shedding tears over His sufferings? No, not at all, beloved friends. He turned Himself about and rebuked them. What He said unto them, St. Luke tells us in our text. Let us now direct our attention to what He said unto them. By the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with our text, I shall now answer the question:—

**What Did Jesus Say to the Daughters of Jerusalem Who Bewailed and Lamented Him on His Sorrowful Way to Calvary?**

He said to them,

1. *"Weep not for Me";* but
2. *"Weep for yourselves, and your children."*

1.

St. Luke tells us in our text: *"And there followed Him a great company of people, and women, which also bewailed and lamented Him."*

That a great company of people, also many women and girls, followed Jesus to His place of crucifixion, was quite human; for most people are of a curious disposition. This is especially true of people whose minds are very much agitated. The trial and condemnation of Jesus by the Jewish council and the Roman governor had aroused the curiosity of the millions of people who were in the city at that time. From all parts of the world, Jews and proselytes had come to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover. It was only natural that the people should be much interested in Jesus, because to most of them He was personally known; for He had preached everywhere and had performed many great miracles during the last three years. Yea, even in His youth, when He was in the Temple debating with the learned Jewish doctors of the Law, His understanding and wisdom arrested their profound attention. From that time on until He began to preach and perform miracles, He went up to the Temple at least once every year for the observation of the Passover. And during the three years of the public ministration of His office, He had gone from city to city, and from town to town, healing the sick and preaching the Gospel of salvation. Yea, He even had raised up some dead persons by His own power. At Nain He said to the dead son of a widow: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!" And what happened? The dead young man did arise from the sleep of death. At Capernaum He raised up the dead daughter of Jairus, and at Bethany, His dear friend Lazarus, who had been dead for four days already, and whose corpse had begun to decay, so that the stench was almost unbearable. Yea, the evangelists tell us that, when Jesus, a few days after the resurrection of Lazarus, came to the city of Jerusalem, the multitudes became very enthusiastic, and cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" (Matt. 21, 9). Even those people, who had come from distant lands to celebrate the Passover, had heard of Jesus. It was therefore quite natural, that many people should have followed Him to Calvary, after He had been sentenced to die upon the cross.

We cannot doubt, beloved friends, that some among that great

company of people were the friends of Jesus; but, of course, most of them were His bitter enemies. If Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus followed Him thither, we surely know that they did so with their hearts filled with grief over the sin of their fellow-men, for they knew that Jesus was innocent of the crimes of which He had been accused. But they could not do anything for Him. St. Luke does not tell us, whether or not some of the men, who followed Jesus, wept, but he does tell us that many of the women did bewail and lament Him, for he writes: "*And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him.*" He does not say that *all* of the women wept. No doubt, there were also some women in that mob who did not weep, but who rejoiced that Jesus was led out to be crucified. All those people who do not truly repent of their sins, whether they be men or women, hate Jesus. It cannot be otherwise, for all self-righteous people have no use for the blessed Savior; He is a thorn in their side. But as a rule, women are not so hard-hearted as men are. Thus it was with many of those women that followed Jesus on His sorrowful way. We would naturally suppose that Jesus should have found some comfort in the groans and tears of those women. He did; but only in the tears of those pious women who truly believed in Him, and who had followed Him to Jerusalem from Galilee, and perhaps some few who lived near Jerusalem as, for example, Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus. But the groans and tears of the unbelieving women of Jerusalem were not at all pleasing unto Jesus. He was not looking for *tears*, but for *believing hearts*, and, therefore, He turned about and said: "*Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and your children.*" Jesus did not rebuke those pious women who believed in Him, but the unbelieving women of Jerusalem, who had pity for Him, but who did not believe in Him as their Savior. All those, who have not given their heart unto Jesus, are not His disciples, and, therefore, their tears, the expression of natural pity, are not precious in His sight, and for this very reason He did not want those women of Jerusalem to weep for Him.

What Jesus said to those women of Jerusalem, holds good to this very day. Outer Christendom is, indeed, full of people like those women of Jerusalem. There are untold numbers of people who outwardly follow Jesus, and even shed tears when they read or hear the history of His Great Passion, but they do not accept Jesus as their Savior from sin, death, and condemnation. Their

tears are not pleasing unto the Lord. There are also many preachers, who imagine that they have accomplished great things for the Lord Jesus, if they can move people to tears over Christ's sufferings and cruel death on the cross. Such preachers are only fooling themselves, if they believe that they have won over those weeping people to Jesus. Many people experience a natural pity for Jesus, if they hear of His unspeakable sufferings in body and soul, but their heart is far from Him. They do not believe, nor do they realize, that their sins have crucified the Lord of Glory. They often vehemently decry the great wickedness of the Jewish rabble and Roman soldiers, but they do not decry their own sinfulness which nailed the Savior to the accursed tree of the cross. Unto all such the Savior says, what He said to those women of Jerusalem: "*Weep not for Me.*"

The Great Passion of Jesus has often been grossly abused. During the Middle Ages the Roman pontiffs abused it in order to further their ambitions and to advance their ecclesiastical and civil powers, as we see from the Seven Crusades which occurred during the years 1096 to 1270. In order to gain Palestine for themselves, the popes sent out monks, priests, and bishops to mobilize the Christians against the Turks or Moslems. And that the Christians might be won over to their machinations, their representatives went from city to city picturing the Great Passion of Jesus unto the people in all its gruesomeness. By abusing the story of Christ's Great Passion in this way, the popes achieved their purpose: they intoxicated the hearts of the people with bitter hatred against the Moslems. In one of the crusades not less than 30,000 children participated,—and perished. Historians tell us that about five million people lost their lives during those crusades. Oh, the great abominations of the papacy! To be sure, Jesus would have told those crusaders, what He told those women of Jerusalem: "*Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and your children.*" If the popes would have had the spirit of Jesus Christ in their hearts, then, beloved friends, they would have sent missionaries to the Moslems with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"*Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and your children.*" These solemn words of the Savior some of the so-called Christian nations in our own time should take to heart. Whenever they wish to take away the rich oil-fields, or certain territories, from the Turks, they decry the Moslems as murderers of the Christians in the Orient. Why do they do that? They do it, because they



wish to rouse Christendom, the Christian people, against the Moslems; to fill the hearts of the Christians with hatred against the Turks, so that they may take up arms against them. No wonder, beloved friends, that the Moslems become suspicious of the so-called Christian nations, and refuse to accept the Gospel of Christ which Christian missionaries bring unto them. The reason why the endeavors of our Christian missionaries are met with such opposition by the Mohammedans and heathens is, because so-called Christian governments are by no means trying to bring the heathen people and the Moslems to the Savior, but because they are trying to rob them of their rightful possessions: their lands and goods. Woe unto such "Christians"! The word of the Savior comes to them, saying: "*Weep for yourselves and for your children.*" All such grossly abuse the Savior, His Word, and His Church. Of this I shall now speak to you in the second place.

## 2.

Jesus told those women of Jerusalem: "*Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.*"

A few days before He had wept over the wickedness of the Jerusalemites, for St. Luke tells us: "And when He was come near, He beheld the city (Jerusalem), and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." (Luke 19, 41—44).

Jesus wept over Jerusalem, because He knew that most of the inhabitants of that great city would not accept Him, nor the salvation that was in Him. He often had come to the Temple-city, and He had preached some mighty sermons there. He had held up the mirror of God's Law unto them, so that they might learn to know their sins and the wrath of God over their sins; He had performed many great miracles before the eyes of the people, and had preached the Gospel in all its sweetness, but, nevertheless, the rank and file of the Jerusalemites despised His loving-kindness; they did not accept Him as their one and only Savior. "O Jeru-

salem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23, 37). Yes, indeed, Jesus tried His very best to save the people of Jerusalem. And His words in our text, which He addressed to the women of the city, were meant for their eternal salvation. He solemnly admonishes them to repent of their sins, and to accept Him, and with this solemn exhortation He connects His dreadful warning: "*For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*"

By these words of solemn and dreadful warning, Jesus wanted to move the women, yea, all the unbelieving inhabitants of Jerusalem, unto true repentance, that is, He wanted them to realize their awful sins, and accept Him as their Savior from sin, death, and condemnation. But His efforts were in vain, at least with most of them. They were a self-righteous and self-satisfied set of people. They bewail and lament Him, but they do not think of bewailing their own sins and the terrible lot that was in store for them. His solemn and dreadful warning could not rouse them from their self-righteousness and hardness of heart. They knew not, nor would they know, the time of their gracious visitation.

Oh, that those women of Jerusalem, and all those who heard the Savior's words, had truly repented! Then, beloved friends, Jesus indeed should have been pleased, and He would not have rebuked them on account of their groans and tears. But they did not do it, and, therefore, Jesus did not want them to weep for Him.

"*Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children!*" This word of solemn admonition and dreadful warning was not heeded then, but some thirty-seven years afterwards, when the Romans came and utterly destroyed the city and its beautiful Temple, the daughters of Jerusalem did weep for themselves and their children. Yea, the blood of Jesus came upon them then. They had cried out into the ears of the Roman governor: "Let Him be crucified! His blood be upon us, and our children!" (Matt. 27, 23, 25.) If they would have truly repented when they heard the words of Jesus on His sorrowful way, then, beloved

friends, their city would not have been destroyed, and they would not have been compelled to weep over Jerusalem's destruction.

These words of Jesus in our text: "*Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children!*" are addressed to all those, even in our own days, who will not weep over their sins, who will not truly repent. And thus it will always be unto the Day of Judgment. On that great day, when the crucified and resurrected Savior of the world shall come in all His glory and power, being accompanied by all the holy angels, to judge the world in righteousness, then all unbelievers, all those who rejected Jesus as their Savior, will cry out to the mountains, "*Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us!*" Yes, then it will be too late to repent. Woe, woe unto all those, who will not weep over their sins, who will not shed tears of repentance while they are here upon this earth, living in this time of grace, for then they shall weep and lament forevermore.

Therefore, my beloved friends, let us not only listen to the Word of God, but let us hear it believingly, that is, let us repent of our sins, and embrace Jesus Christ as our one and only Savior. Let us weep over our sins which caused such terrible sufferings, and such an ignominious death to our Savior, then our tears shall please Him, and He will say unto us: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11, 28). And on the great Day of Judgment we shall hear this blessed word out of His mouth: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25, 34) God grant this for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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## The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Mark 15, 22—28.

And they bring Him unto the place Golgatha, which is, being interpreted, The Place of a Skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh; but He received it not. And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the superscription of His accusation was written over, The King of the Jews. And with Him they crucify two thieves; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors.

We know from the Holy Scriptures, that God created man in His own image, that is, in perfect righteousness and holiness, — without sin; but man fell into sin when he became disobedient unto God. And since the Fall many crimes have been committed by sinful men. The first hideous crime after the Fall, recorded in the Bible, was the fratricide of Cain. When people began to multiply, there were, of course, many great crimes committed by them, and the number of monstrous crimes increased from decade to decade, and from century to century, until God finally destroyed the first world by the Flood. Yes, wickedness had become so universal, that only eight souls, Noah and his family, were saved. All other people then living perished in the waters of the Flood. When after the Flood people began to multiply, wickedness again became rampant among them, and the Lord gave vent to His righteous wrath by destroying whole cities. Yea, even among the members of the Church, crimes were not unknown. The sons of Jacob grossly sinned against their brother Joseph, for they sold him to some Midianites, and said to their father, that he had been destroyed by some ferocious beast.

Indeed, it was a great crime when Joseph's brothers committed that hideous sin. They thought evil against him; but God meant it unto good. Pious Joseph, by the grace of God, was finally highly exalted in Egypt, and through him the Lord saved much people alive. Even the brothers of Joseph were saved through him from death by starvation. Therefore Joseph could truthfully say unto them: "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Gen. 50, 20).

But the most monstrous crime that was ever committed by men since the world began, was the crime of which St. Mark tells us in our text: *the crucifixion of Jesus Christ*. By the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with our text, let me now call your devout attention to the—

### Crucifixion of Jesus Christ on Mount Calvary.

Let me show,

1. *That men, indeed, thought evil against Him; but*
2. *God meant it unto good, to save all sinful men.*

#### 1.

St. Mark tells us in our text: “*And they bring Him unto the place Golgatha, which is, being interpreted, The Place of a Skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh; but He received it not. And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, when they crucified Him.*”

We have already heard, beloved friends, how Jesus sank down into the dust of the way leading to Mount Calvary, and how a man by the name of Simon, a Cyrenian, was compelled to help Him carry His heavy cross. Finally they arrived on Calvary’s top, the place of crucifixion. This place was called Golgatha by the Jews. Golgatha means, the place of a skull. It was so called, either because of its peculiar shape, resembling the upper part of a human skull, or because of the human skulls and bones that were found there, for as a rule, the remains of the crucified were put into a very shallow grave, from which they were easily scratched up by dogs and hyenas that gnawed off the flesh and left the bones.

When the murderers of Jesus had arrived on Calvary they offered Him a drink, a potion consisting of wine or vinegar and myrrh or gall. This potion was always offered to those who were crucified. It would stupefy their sensibilities, so that they would not fully feel the unspeakable sufferings or pains which were caused by the crucifixion; but Jesus refused to take the potion; He wanted to remain conscious to the very last, so that He could speak His Seven Words from the cross.

After the stupefying drink had been offered to and refused by Jesus, the four soldiers who were to crucify Him, laid Him on the cross and drove big nails through His hands and feet, thus nailing Him to the accursed tree. Then they lifted up the cross and fastened it in the ground. The Savior was now hanging upon the



cross, suffering unspeakable pains. Then the four soldiers divided His clothes into four parts and cast lots, to decide which part each one should have. For His coat they also cast lots. St. Mark says that it was the third hour of the day, when they crucified Him, that is, nine o'clock in the morning.

Death by crucifixion was not only the most *painful*, but also the most *shameful*. The Jews did not crucify a criminal, but they stoned him and, if he had committed a monstrous crime, they would hang him on a tree or cross in order to make manifest their detestation of the crime he had committed. The Romans, however, introduced crucifixion among the Jews, when they had become their masters. The Romans would crucify only foreigners and slaves. It seems that they took pleasure in crucifying the Jews, for they hated them intensely. But by Romans and Jews alike, death by crucifixion was considered to be very disgraceful. In order to disgrace Jesus of Nazareth, He was not only crucified, but also crucified between two thieves or robbers, for St. Mark says in our text: "*And with Him they crucify two thieves; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors.*" Indeed, they thought evil against Jesus; their hearts were filled with bitterness against Him, who had never wronged anyone, but who had shown nothing but compassion and loving-kindness to all that came to Him when in trouble and distress, and who had showered upon them gifts of His divine love.

Indeed, beloved friends, it was the most hideous crime that was ever committed by men, when they crucified Jesus Christ on Mount Calvary! The accusers of Jesus, the Jews, were well aware of the fact that He was innocent of the crimes of which they accused Him. All of them knew that He was not a rebel against the Roman government, for He had said: "Give unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." (Matt. 21. 22). Yea, after He had miraculously fed five thousand men in a wilderness, and when those men tried to make Him their king, He consented not. (John 6, 15). They all knew that He never had wronged anyone, but that He had helped many in their needs of body and soul. Every one knew that Jesus was as innocent as a new-born child, but, nevertheless, Jews and Romans crucified Him. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was, indeed, the very pinnacle of human wickedness! Never before, nor after, was there such a monstrous crime committed by human beings! Indeed, they thought evil against Him:

they hated Him with all their heart, and they thirsted for His innocent blood. The very devils could not have outdone them.

But, my friends, we must not at all believe, that those wicked Roman soldiers and the Jewish rabble are the only people who committed that awful crime. No, there are others who helped them nail Jesus to His cross, and who are responsible for His crucifixion. Who are those other people? Every one of us, who knows just a little about the Bible, knows that those others are all sinful men, we included; for Jesus was crucified for all sinful men, also for every one of us. Those Roman soldiers and the Jewish rabble were only the representatives of mankind. There is no man living today, who can truthfully say, that he did not help crucify the very Son of God. It matters not, whether men acknowledge this to be a fact, for a fact it is, and a fact it will always be. Yes, our sins, the sins of mankind, crucified Jesus Christ! Therefore Isaiah cried out, saying: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Is. 53, 4—6). And St. Paul writes: "For He (God the Father) hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5, 21). You and I, beloved friends, that is, our sins, crucified Jesus. Yes, every one of us must say with the Christian Poet Paul Gerhardt:—

My burden, in Thy Passion,  
Lord, Thou hast borne for me,  
For it was my transgression  
Which brought this woe on Thee.  
I cast me down before Thee,  
Wrath were my rightful lot;  
Have mercy, I implore Thee,  
Redeemer, spurn me not!

And with another Christian poet:—

Whence come these sorrows, whence this mortal anguish?  
It is my sins for which Thou, Lord, must languish;  
Yes, all the wrath, the woe Thou dost inherit,  
'Tis I do merit.

Indeed, men thought evil against Him, but God meant it unto good, to save sinful mankind. Of this I shall speak to you in the second place.

2.

Jesus Christ was crucified for us and all sinful men. Thus His heavenly Father considered His crucifixion. He died for us, that we and all sinners might live. His sufferings and death brought forgiveness of sin, life and salvation to a lost and condemned sinner-world. Yes, Christ's death is our life. By His sufferings and death we sinners are redeemed. That is the great mystery of godliness which the Gospel reveals to us.

This Gospel-truth is foolishness unto the worldly-wise and self-righteous people, therefore St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness." (1 Cor. 1, 22. 23). The Gospel of Christ crucified, has always been a stumblingblock unto the self-righteous, and foolishness unto the worldly-wise. The Gospel-truth, that poor sinners can be saved only through the blood of Jesus Christ, and not by their own works, is to this very day despised by all worldly-wise and self-righteous people. Sneeringly they refuse to accept it. They aver that the Gospel is a doctrine which degrades human beings. They say that enlightened men of the twentieth century are not in need of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Christian theology, so they say, belittles the love of God. A salvation, such as the Bible teaches, they assert, was not at all necessary, for every man can work out his own salvation. Vehemently they declare that God could not be the God of love, if He had consented to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and, so they furthermore declare, Jesus could not have been the only-begotten Son of God, as the Bible declares Him to be, for God never would have permitted His own Son to suffer such a painful and disgraceful death. Jesus, so they tell us, was a good man, a great preacher, who had to suffer a martyr's death for the principles which He promulgated. Thus, beloved friends, most people, even many of those who would be true Christians, think and speak in our day. But God's Word does not teach any such thing. According to the Bible God is, and can be, gracious unto sinful men only and solely for the sake of Jesus Christ. Without Jesus Christ God is, and always will be, a consuming fire. All those who would be saved without Jesus, His blood, and righteousness, will be eternally lost, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby they must be saved, than the name of Jesus. (Acts 4, 12).

St. Mark tells us that the accusation, which the Jews had

brought against Jesus, was fastened over His head upon the cross. Pontius Pilate himself had written it in three languages, in the Hebrew, the Latin, and the Greek languages, and it read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Pilate, of course, meant to chagrin the Jews, especially their chiefs, the highpriests, elders, scribes, and Pharisees, but he, nevertheless, had written the truth, for Jesus of Nazareth was, indeed, the true King of the Jews. By this term the pious Jews always understood the promised Messiah, and the promised Messiah Jesus was. He was He, whom the heavenly Father had sent into this world, that, by His sufferings and death, He might redeem sinful mankind from sin, death, and eternal condemnation. The heavenly Father permitted the crucifixion of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, because He wished to save the lost, as Jesus Himself had said: "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." (Matt. 18, 11). And again: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3, 16). That is the reason why St. John writes: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1, 7). And St. Peter writes to his fellow-Christians: "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Pet. 1, 18, 19). Yes, by His bitter sufferings and death upon the accursed tree of the cross Jesus paid our debts, He redeemed us unto God. (Rev. 5, 9). All the gold and silver in this world could not have paid for our sins. There was but *one* price so precious in the sight of the heavenly Father, that it could pay mankind's debts, and that price could be paid only and solely by Jesus Christ, the God-man Savior. This precious price was His blood. That is the reason the Father suffered Him to be crucified. Yea, men, indeed, thought evil against Him, but God meant it unto good, to save all sinful men.

Let us, then, beloved friends, regard the bitter sufferings and death of Jesus Christ as the *only ransom* for our souls. Let us shed tears over *our sins* which caused Him such bitter sufferings and cruel death upon the cross, but at the same time let us *rejoice* and be *glad* that we have *Jesus*, our most beloved Savior. Let us cling to Him in life and in death, for then we can give our soul into His

keeping when death's cold hand takes us from hence, and joyfully say with a Christian poet:—

I fall asleep in Jesus' wounds,  
There pardon for my sins abounds;  
Yea, Jesus' blood and righteousness  
My jewels are, my glorious dress,  
Wherein before my God I stand  
When I shall reach the heavenly land.

With peace and joy I now depart,  
God's child I am with all my heart;  
I thank thee, death, thou leadest me  
To that true life where I would be.  
So cleansed by Christ I fear not death.  
Lord Jesus, strengthen Thou my faith!

Amen.

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## “JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

John 19, 19—22.

And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that He said, I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

Under the Romans all those who had been sentenced to die upon the cross, were obliged to carry their own cross to the place of crucifixion, and, furthermore, they were also compelled to carry a tablet about their neck upon which the cause for their crucifixion was written. This Jesus also had to do. This was done in order to humiliate and disgrace the person to be nailed to the cross. After the crucifixion had taken place the tablet was fastened over the head of the victim.

As we know from the Holy Scriptures, there were two malefactors crucified with Jesus, the one to His right hand, and the other to His left. Over the heads of the two malefactors such a tablet was also fastened, giving the reason for their crucifixion. According to tradition the names of the two malefactors were *Dismas* and *Gesmas*. The holy Evangelist John, however, does not tell us how those superscriptions read.

The superscription over the head of the blessed Savior of the world read: “JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” Pilate himself had written it in three languages: in the Hebrew-Aramaic, the Greek, and the Latin. Let us now, beloved friends, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, direct our devout attention to this superscription:—

### “JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

Let me show,

1. *That Jesus was not such a king as most Jews so eagerly desired.*

2. *That He was, however, such a king as they as well as all sinful men so badly needed.*

1.

St. John writes in our text: “*And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZA-*

*RETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified\* was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin."*

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, had done the right thing, when he wrote on that tablet which was to be fastened over the head of the crucified Jesus, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Pilate had written the truth; for that was the base accusation which the Jews had preferred against Jesus. St. Luke expressly tells us, that they said to the governor: "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying, that He Himself is Christ, a King." And when Pilate asked Jesus: "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered and said to him: "Thou sayest it." (Luke 23, 2. 3). But Jesus was not, and never claimed to be, such a king as the Jews accused Him of being, and the Jews were well aware of this fact. They only brought this accusation against Jesus, in order to prejudice Pontius Pilate against Him. Jesus was not, and He never claimed to be, a worldly king or ruler. Had such been the case, the Jews, indeed, would not have brought Him before the tribunal of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, but they would have hailed Him with great delight, for they were eagerly desiring a worldly king, who should free them from the yoke of the Roman Caesars. I need but call your attention to two incidents recorded in the Bible, that prove beyond any doubt, that Jesus of Nazareth never wanted to be a worldly ruler, or a king of the Jews, in the sense of the accusation which the Jews preferred against Him before Pontius Pilate. When, for example, Jesus had fed about five thousand men, and, perhaps, as many women and children, in a wilderness with five loaves of bread and two fishes, they did not only cry out: "This is of truth that Prophet that should come into the world," but they also tried their very best to make Him their king. (John 6, 14. 15). And again, when Jesus came to the city of Jerusalem a few days prior to His crucifixion, the multitudes hailed Him, crying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is

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\* The place of crucifixion was called *Golgotha* by the Jews. "Its exact location has never been determined, in spite of the many claims that such has been the case. And it is best so, since even now the various denominations that have representatives at the Holy City are in the habit of fighting almost pitched battles over the supposed holy places." (Kretzmann, Popular Commentary, I, 517.)

He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the Highest!" (Matt. 21, 9). They were of the opinion that Jesus had come unto them with the intention to become their king, that is, their worldly ruler. He had performed many great miracles, and they hoped that He would use His wonderful powers in order to free them from the dominion of the Romans. (See: Luke 24, 21). But when they became aware of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth would not do as they had expected Him to do, that is, that He would not free them from the power of the Roman Caesars, they turned against Him. Had Jesus been such a king as they so eagerly desired, they never would have brought Him before Pontius Pilate, pleading for His crucifixion; no, they would rather have taken up arms against Pilate and the Roman guard in the city. Had Jesus cried out unto them, "Comrades, fellow-Jews, come follow Me! Take up arms against the accursed Roman oppressors! Long live the Jewish people and the kingdom of David!" I say, beloved friends, had Jesus said anything of this sort unto the Jewish multitudes, they would have gladly obeyed Him, and they would have, perhaps, even crucified the Roman governor and his soldiers. But Jesus was not, nor did He want to be, such a king as they so eagerly desired, and for this very reason they were His most bitter enemies. Yea, Jesus had even told them to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's (Matt. 22, 21), and thus He had admonished them to subject themselves to the Roman government. For this reason they hated Him so much, and clamored for His crucifixion, crying out to the governor: "Let Him be crucified! His blood be on us, and on our children!" (Matt. 27, 23, 25).

"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Thus, indeed, Pontius Pilate could also write with great personal satisfaction, for he hated the Jews with all his heart. By that superscription he wished to chagrin the Jews, especially the chief priests and elders. He wanted to say to them, "Behold, your great king! Indeed, a mighty king of a great nation! I am very grateful unto the gods for having permitted me to pronounce judgment upon this great Jewish king! Look at that beautiful crown your king is wearing, a crown, such as never before graced the head of any king! David, Solomon, and all the other kings of your great nation cannot be compared with this mighty king! And what a wonderful throne he has, — a cross! Hail this King of the Jews!" And the Jews, especially the chief priests and elders, felt the sting

of the proud Roman's irony. That superscription was a real thorn in their side. And the governor had written it in three well-known languages, so that all people could understand it. Therefore, as St. John tells us in our text, the chief priests of the Jews went to Pilate and said unto him: "*Write not, the King of the Jews; but that He said, I am the King of the Jews.*" But Pontius Pilate refused to grant their request, for he said to them: "*What I have written I have written.*" He wanted to say, that he was not in need of their advice, that he knew very well what he was doing.

But, dear friends, those chief priests and elders of the Jews had acted very judiciously after all. They, of course, had seen that superscription before it was fastened over the head of Jesus on the cross; they had seen it while it was hanging about His neck on the way to Calvary, but they waited until He was hanging on the accursed tree, before they asked the Roman governor to change it. Without the least doubt, they feared that Pilate might rescind his sentence, if they should ask him to change that superscription before Jesus had been crucified. Yes, they really had outwitted the proud Roman after all.

Jesus of Nazareth was not the King of the Jews in the sense in which Pontius Pilate had written that superscription, for He never had claimed to be a worldly king or ruler; no, He had told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world, for when Pilate had asked Jesus: "*Art Thou a king, then?*" Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end I was born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." (John 18, 37). These words of Jesus prove that He wanted to be nothing more, nor less, than a spiritual king. He was, indeed, a king, such as Pontius Pilate, all the Jews, and all other sinful men so badly needed. Of this I shall now speak to you in the second place.

## 2.

Immediately after the Roman governor had pronounced the death-sentence upon Jesus, He was led away to Golgatha to be crucified. This amazes us, my friends, for we are accustomed to a very different procedure in executing death-sentences. Our laws forbid such a procedure. Whenever a criminal is sentenced to suffer the extreme penalty of the law, he is granted a certain period of time in which he may prepare himself for his death. It was not only a custom, but a law among the Romans to grant all who had been sentenced to death a period of at least ten days of grace be-



fore their execution. This Pontius Pilate knew very well, and, from all accounts it appears that in the past Pilate never had acted contrary to this statute. Barabbas, for example, was not executed immediately after the death-sentence had been pronounced upon him; nor the two malefactors who were crucified with Jesus. They had been sentenced before Pontius Pilate pronounced judgment upon Jesus of Nazareth. But Jesus was led out to the place of execution immediately after He had been sentenced. The Roman governor must have had some valid reasons for acting thus, at least in his own mind. He would not have transgressed a law which the Roman Caesar Tiberius had decreed, for Pilate would not wish to invite the wrath of his emperor upon himself, since Caesar Tiberius had appointed him to the office which he held. Pilate, undoubtedly, was of the opinion that he was rendering his emperor a special service by putting Jesus of Nazareth out of the way immediately. He must have heard about the miracles which Jesus had performed throughout the whole land, and, perhaps, he was afraid Jesus might do other great miracles, if he should grant Him those ten days of grace, to which He was entitled according to the law, and that the people then might ask for His release, as they had done in Barabbas' case. What would happen to me, he thought, if that should be the case? Then Jesus might call the Jews to arms against him and his soldiers. Therefore he would take no risk whatever. The sooner he could get Jesus out of the way, the better it would be for him and his government. And, furthermore, when the governor thought of the message which his wife had sent unto him while he was on the judgment-seat trying Jesus, and of the solemn words which he had heard out of the mouth of Jesus, he felt that the worst might happen. His wife had sent him this message: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." (Matt. 27, 19). And to his question, "Art Thou a king, then?" Jesus had answered, "Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." These solemn words had filled the heart of Pilate with fear. He felt the sting of Jesus' solemn words of warning in his conscience. He thought that this Jesus of Nazareth might, indeed, be that King of the Jews, of whom the old Jewish prophets had foretold that He was to come and save His people from their enemies. By all means, he was of the opinion that it should be best for him, if he ordered the im-



mediate execution of the sentence which he had pronounced upon Jesus of Nazareth,—this mysterious King of the Jews. Poor Pontius Pilate! Had he only listened to the warnings of his own conscience! But he did not; he suppressed its warning voice for personal gains. Indeed, Pontius Pilate had thrown away his soul's salvation! He had recklessly neglected the one thing needful, he had turned himself against his one and only Savior.

And that is what the Jews also did; they rejected Him who was Messiah, for whose coming they had waited and prayed for many centuries. Had they only realized that Pilate's superscription contained divine truth; that Jesus of Nazareth was in deed and in truth that Promised One, the true King of the Jews, they surely would not have clamored for His crucifixion; they knew not the day of their gracious visitation.

Jesus of Nazareth, my beloved friends, is, indeed, what that superscription proclaimed: He is the King of the Jews, that is, the true Messiah, the one and only Savior of mankind. He was that King, whom Pilate, and all the Jews so badly needed for their eternal salvation. He is that Savior which all sinful men need to this very day, if they would be eternally saved; for without Him there is no salvation. (Acts 4, 12). He came into this world and into our flesh, that He might suffer and die for us, and redeem us to God by His blood. (Rev. 5, 9). Men, indeed, thought evil against Him, but God meant it unto good, to save much people, all mankind, alive. He is that great Savior-King whom all sinful men need, if they ever would be eternally saved. Every one of us here present is badly in need of Jesus for his soul's salvation, for every one of us is by nature a lost and condemned sinner. Not one of us can save himself. All our good works avail nothing. No one can be saved by his works, because they are imperfect and, therefore, not meritorious before God. We all need a Savior that is able to save us from sin and its wages. There is such a Savior. But there is only *one* such Savior. This one Savior is Jesus Christ, the King of the Jews. He is the one and only Savior-King whom *all* people need. Whosoever does not accept Him as his only Savior-King, as his only Redeemer from sin, death, and condemnation, cannot be eternally saved, for there is salvation in none other than in Jesus Christ. We accept Him as our Savior and King by true faith, and through faith in Him alone we are eternally saved.

My dear friend, how is it with you? You know that you are

a sinner, a great sinner, in God's sight, because you have so often transgressed His holy commandments in thought, word, and deed. That you are a great sinner your own conscience tells you. You also know that you cannot save yourself, and yet you would like to be eternally saved. Would you not?

Oh, go to the one and only Savior-King, to Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews! See Him hanging upon the accursed tree of the cross, for you, and for me, and for all mankind! Behold Him in His unspeakable agony while He hangs there. Look to that superscription fastened over His thorn-crowned, bleeding, but sacred head, and read it. It tells you, who He is that is hanging there: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, that is, the promised Messiah, the one and only Savior of the whole world. Put all your trust in Him. Rely upon His work done for you. Cling to Him by true faith, and then you have a Savior-King that is able to save and protect you in time and in eternity.

No one that goes to Jesus will be disappointed. Jesus will save and protect him, for He says: "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." (John 6, 37). "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3, 16). And His gracious promise to all those who embrace Him by true faith is: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." (John 10, 27. 28). Indeed, my beloved fellow-Christians, we have a loving, a mighty Savior-King: *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*; the Savior-King of the whole sinful world! Let us always trust in Him, and always serve Him with a willing heart! God grant this for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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## **“Father, Forgive Them; for They Know Not What They Do!”**

Luke 23, 34.

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

Speaking of our dear Savior Jesus Christ, St. Luke says: “And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” And “He took unto Him the Twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again.”

With these words Jesus predicted His *Great Passion*, His bitter sufferings and cruel death upon the cross. And not many days hence, His prediction was literally fulfilled. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve apostles and the treasurer of the Lord's company, betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver, and delivered Him into the hands of His enemies. They seized Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, where He had gone to pray. The Lord, however, voluntarily gave Himself into the hands of His enemies. After they had taken Him captive they bound Him, and took Him to the city of Jerusalem and arraigned Him before the Sanhedrin, that is, the Supreme Council of the Jews. Bribed witnesses testified against Jesus, but their witness agreed not together. Nevertheless, the Sanhedrin pronounced Him guilty of death. But as it was not vested with the power to execute capital punishment upon any one, the Savior was hastily arraigned before Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator (governor). Pontius Pilate, of course, knew very well that Jesus of Nazareth was innocent of the base accusations which they brought against Him, and, therefore, he made several attempts to release Him; yea, he even had Jesus scourged in order to move the Jews with compassion for Him, but all his efforts were in vain. Finally he assented to let them have their way, and he delivered Jesus unto them that He should be crucified. And immediately they led Jesus away to a place which was called Golgatha (Calvary). There they crucified Him, and two malefactors with Him; one to His right hand, and the other to His left. Yea, they crucified the very Son of God.

The Savior of the world hung upon the accursed tree of the cross for six long hours. While He hung upon the cross, He spoke His so-called *Seven Words*. God willing, we shall contemplate these words during this year's Season of Lent. In our text we have His first word from the cross. Let me, then, beloved friends, now call your devout attention to the first word of Jesus from the cross. He cried out:

**"Father, Forgive Them; for They Know Not What They Do!"**

This word is,

1. *A prayer for His enemies, and*
2. *An example for His friends.*

1.

*"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!"* These words contain a prayer. Jesus prayed; but He did not pray for Himself, as He had done in Gethsemane, where He thrice fell upon His face and prayed, saying: "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt. Thy will be done!" No; He now prays for His most bitter enemies. Thus He exemplified the spirit which He taught in His Sermon on the Mount, when He said: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5, 43—48). Jesus of Nazareth, the Savior of the sinful world, prayed for His enemies,—for those who hated, cursed, persecuted, and murdered Him. Oh, what love! He prayed: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!" Forgive whom? Of course, *all of His enemies*. In the first place, the *Roman soldiers* who nailed Him to the cross.

But some one might say, Why did He pray for them? Did they not do, as they were obliged to do according to the Roman



law? Were they not mere executioners of the governor's decree, and, therefore, not responsible for His crucifixion? It is true, they were doing what they were obliged to do when they crucified Jesus. They were the executioners of the death-sentence which Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, had pronounced; but, nevertheless, they were enemies of Jesus Christ; for St. Matthew says: "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head." (Matt. 27, 27—30). All this they did of their own accord, and not by the command of the Roman governor. Can any one deny the fact that they hated Jesus? Verily not. Their hearts were every bit as black with hatred against Jesus as the hearts of the Jews. For these inhuman soldiers the Savior prayed, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do!"

But Jesus also prayed for His *Jewish enemies*; for the chiefs of the Jews: Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, elders, scribes, yea, for the whole multitude of bloodthirsty Jews, who cried out against Him to Pontius Pilate: "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" (John 19, 6). "His blood be on us, and on our children!" (Matt. 27, 25). Even when Jesus had already been crucified, and while He was hanging on the cross, those men could not refrain from mocking and abusing Him; for St. Matthew says of them: "And they that passed by reviled Him wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him; for He said, I am the Son of God."

Perhaps, my dear friends, the all-seeing eye of Jesus saw the uplifted arm of the just and righteous God, as it was about to strike them, and, therefore, He prayed for them: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!" "They know not what they do"; that was not a *reason for forgiveness*, but an *argument for mercy*. They ought to have known better than they did. They



had seen the many and great miracles which Jesus had wrought, and they heard many of His Gospel-sermons. Indeed, they should have known better than they did!

And, finally, let us not overlook, nor forget the fact that Jesus also prayed for *us*, when He cried out: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!" "We also were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Eph. 2, 3). "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners (God's enemies), Christ died for us." (Rom. 5, 8). "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!" was a prayer for Romans and Jews, representatives of mankind in this act of crucifixion. If we and all other men were not sinners, the Jews and Roman soldiers never would have crucified Jesus. "Therefore," says Dr. Luther, "if He prayed for His crucifiers, He also prayed for us; for our sins crucified Him." St. Paul says: "Christ was delivered for our offenses." (Rom. 4, 25). Yea, God made Him to be sin for us. (2 Cor. 5, 21). And Isaiah says of Jesus: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." Indeed, you and I, yea, all men, were His enemies. Our sins crucified Him. This prayer of Jesus expresses the whole meaning of His crucifixion: That sinners might be forgiven.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!" That is the continual prayer of Jesus for us. Whenever we sin, Jesus prays for us. Whenever His Father in His just anger over our sins stretches forth His arm of justice to strike us, then Jesus, our crucified and risen Savior, holds up His own hands with their nailprints in them, and says, "Father, My dear Father, Behold these nailprints in My hands! For My sake have mercy upon the poor sinners, and be gracious unto them; for I have redeemed them with My bitter sufferings and ignominious death on the cross!" Therefore St. John says: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Of course, if sinners will not accept Jesus Christ as their one and only Savior, if they trample His love and blood under foot by unbelief, that is, if they deny Him that has bought them with His precious blood, then they are eternally lost, (2 Pet. 2, 1), for there is salvation in none other. (Acts 4, 12). "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But those, who are not saved, must blame them-

selves, for it is their own fault. Jesus Christ saved them also, but they deny Him..

The first word of Jesus from the cross is not only a prayer for His enemies, but also an example for His disciples, which they must follow. Of this I shall now speak to you in the second place.

## 2.

Jesus practised what He taught: He loved His enemies. His love for His enemies is and must be an example, which all *Christians* must follow. Why not *all men*? Because non-Christians, unbelievers and hypocrites cannot follow Christ's example, for they cannot love their enemies. They may claim that they love their enemies, but they do not. It is altogether impossible for natural man to love his enemies. The unbelieving, unregenerate, or natural man loves only his friends, but hates his enemies. His maxim is, "Love those, who love you; love a friend, but hate an enemy." He considers true Christians fools, if they love their enemies.

True Christians only are capable of *loving* their enemies. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." (2 Cor. 5, 17). "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Gal. 5, 24). Therefore they, and they only, are Christ-like. They do not only love their friends, but also their enemies. But while they love their enemies, they do not love the wicked principles and evil ways of their enemies. No; these they hate, and against these they war continually. But why do they war against these? Let me ask another question. Why does a good father, for instance, scold and chastise his disobedient boy? Does he do it because he hates him? No; he does it because he loves the boy, but hates the boy's sins and wickedness. Exactly so true Christians. While they love their enemies, they hate and abhor their sins and wickedness. Of course, most people think that a true Christian hates a person, if he reproves him for his sins and his wickedness, but that is a sad mistake. It is rather love, true love, that prompts a Christian to reprove a man for his ungodly principles and wicked deeds. A Christian follows the example of his Lord and Savior. Jesus Christ loved men, even the most wicked, but He hated their sins, and He severely rebuked men for their wickedness.

A true Christian also *prays* for his enemies. Let us cast a glance upon the Christian martyrs, and be convinced, my dear

friends. St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was stoned to death by his enemies, by a Jewish rabble or mob. But what did he do? Did he hate and curse them for stoning him? No; he rather prayed for them, saying: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 7, 60). Church history tells us of thousands upon thousands of Christian martyrs who prayed for their enemies. During the so-called Ten Great Persecutions (A. D. 64—311) many Christians were terribly persecuted. They were racked, burned, crucified, stoned, beheaded, cast to ferocious beasts, buried alive, and in many other ways put to death, but these awful persecutions could not keep them from praying for their enemies, their murderers. It is truthfully said, that the blood of the Christian martyrs became the seed of the Christian Church. But why? Because the Christian martyrs *loved* their enemies, and *prayed* for them. They in deed and in truth followed Christ's example; they took Him for their example or archetype.

It is quite natural that a man should judge others by himself. Therefore unbelievers and hypocrites cannot believe that true Christians really love their enemies and pray for them. They imagine that all Christians are like unto themselves. Yes, there are even many church people, and this I must say with sadness of heart, who do not even want to admit, that true Christians love their enemies. But all such church people are in reality not true Christians, even though they may be regarded as exemplary members of the Church; no, they are self-deceived people. If you do not love your enemies, and if you cannot pray for them, then, my friend, you are as yet not a true Christian, for all true Christians love their enemies and pray for them. Unbelievers and hypocrites become very much offended, if a true Christian reproves them on account of their sins and vices, and they hate him. But a true Christian does not hate that person who reproves him on account of his sins. He rather says with King David: "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." (Ps. 141, 5). A true Christian reproves others because he loves them, and wishes them to put away their sins. He, therefore, judges others by himself. He believes that others also love him when they reprove him on account of his shortcomings and sins. He is not offended, nor does he hate his reprovers, but he loves them only so much the more. Yea, even when his enemies reprove him with the intent to

wound his feelings, and to pour out upon him their hatred, a true Christian does not recompense evil for evil, but he overcomes evil with good, and he prays for his enemies, and wishes them God's grace unto repentance. Yes, indeed, a true Christian follows Christ's example: he loves his enemies and prays for them, for their conversion.

To be sure, my beloved fellow-Christians, we cannot love our enemies, nor can we pray for them without God's gracious help. Therefore let us never forget to ask Him for His Holy Spirit, so that by His gracious assistance we shall more and more become followers of Him, who in divine love gave Himself for us and all sinful men, and prayed for all, when He suffered for them. Yes, let us daily pray from all our heart with the Christian poet (Justus Gesenius):—

And let me do to others,  
As Thou hast done to me,  
Love all men as my brothers,  
And serve them willingly,  
With ready heart, nor seek my own,  
But as Thou, Lord, hast helped us,  
From purest love alone.

And let Thy cross upbear me  
With strength, when I depart;  
Tell me that naught can tear me  
From my Redeemer's heart,  
But since my trust is in Thy grace,  
Thou wilt accept me yonder,  
Where I shall see Thy face!

Amen.

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## Jesus and the Penitent Malefactor.

Luke 23, 42. 43.

And he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.

Two men were crucified with Jesus; one to His right hand, and the other to His left. St. Luke says that these two men were malefactors. Matthew and Mark tell us that they were thieves and robbers. Thus the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors.

While Jesus was thus hanging between two malefactors, and while He was being derided by Roman soldiers and Jewish fanatics, He cried out, praying: "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!*" This intercession for His enemies was His first word from the cross. Indeed, this intercession for them should have softened their stony hearts, but it did not. They derided Him only more severely, for St. Luke says in the verses preceding our text: "And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the Chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, If Thou be the king of the Jews, save Thyself. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done nothing amiss." And when he had thus rebuked his fellow-criminal, he turned his face toward Jesus and said unto Him: "*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!*" Then Jesus answered him, saying: "*Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.*" This promise, given to the penitent and believing malefactor, was the second word of Jesus spoken from the cross. Let us now direct our attention to it in connection with the penitent malefactor's petition. The subject for our present contemplation therefore shall be, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit:—

### Jesus and the Penitent Malefactor.

We shall consider,

1. *The petition of the malefactor.*
2. *The promise of the Savior.*



1.

The penitent and believing malefactor had been a robber, and, most probably, a murderer. He had been arrested, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be crucified. The Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, had made no mistake, when he pronounced the death-penalty upon this malefactor and his associate in his crimes, and ordered that they be crucified. Indeed, these two men were malefactors, criminals in the real sense of the word. There cannot be the least doubt about it that they were guilty, for the penitent malefactor himself admits their guilt: yea, he even publicly announced it from the cross, when he rebuked his fellow-criminal, saying: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds." But he was firmly convinced that it was altogether different with that Man, who was hanging between them, for he says of Jesus: "But this Man hath done nothing amiss." Of course, he was not the only man who was convinced of Jesus' innocence, but he was the only one, who had the courage to declare his firm conviction of the innocence of Jesus Christ. Many others knew that Jesus was innocent, but they were either ashamed or afraid to speak for Him. The penitent malefactor, however, believed, and therefore he spoke.

What did he believe? He believed that Jesus of Nazareth must be the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world. He was a Jew, and, therefore, he had a knowledge of the prophecies concerning Messiah. No doubt, his parents often had spoken to him of the promised Savior, that great "Son of David", who was to come, and deliver Israel from all adversaries. It is also very probable that he had heard of Jesus of Nazareth, yea, he even may have heard some of Jesus' many Gospel-sermons. By all means, Jesus of Nazareth seemed to him to be a very remarkable man, whose deportment was more divine than human. He had heard the words which Jesus has spoken to those women, who followed Him to the place of crucifixion, to Golgatha, bewailing and lamenting Him. Jesus had said to them: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the paps that never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" He also had listened to that first

word of Jesus from the cross, — that word of loving intercession for His enemies: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!" What a man, what a wonderful man He must be! How is it possible, thinks he, that this Jesus of Nazareth can thus pray for His crucifiers and most bitter enemies, the Jewish mob! Such deportment he could not comprehend, lest Jesus be that promised Messiah. He turns his face about to look at Jesus, this wonderful being. He beholds a tablet fastened to the top of the cross over Jesus' head, and he reads these words: "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." The term, "King of the Jews"; or "King of Israel", was familiar to every Jew then living; for thus the Jews called the promised Messiah. And from what he had heard and seen of Jesus of Nazareth, he was persuaded that Jesus *must* be the promised Messiah. He also knew that Messiah was to have a kingdom, and for that reason he said to Jesus: "*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.*" "His ideas of the kingdom are probably incorrect and very crude; but he ventures his hopes on this Jesus as King, yet to triumph, and begs remembrance in that unknown future." (Lutheran Commentary, Luke. 426.)

"*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!*" That is the petition of the penitent and believing malefactor on the cross. It is a remarkable petition, which is based on a still more remarkable faith. He calls Jesus *Lord*. He was the only man that called Him by this name, while Jesus was hanging on the cross, as the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of the world. (John 1, 29; Rev. 5, 9). He truly believes that Jesus, this Lord, has a kingdom in the other world, in the hereafter; and he prays: "*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.*" How great, beloved friends, is the humbleness of this penitent and believing malefactor! He does not consider himself worthy to be taken into Jesus' kingdom, but he wishes Jesus to remember him, when He has entered into His kingdom in the other and better world. That was true evangelical penitence. He confesses his own unworthiness and sinfulness, and yet he puts his trust in Jesus. He believes that Jesus will make all things well for him, when He comes into His kingdom. If Jesus will only remember him, then all will be well for him. Oh, what a remarkable faith in Jesus!

It is indeed true, others have had a remarkable faith in Jesus also, for instance, the Roman centurion at Capernaum, and the Syrophenician woman in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, but under

the prevailing circumstances, the faith of this penitent malefactor on the accursed tree of the cross was the most remarkable, the greatest of them all. And his great faith was not put to shame. Jesus, in whom this penitent and believing malefactor trusted, said to him: "*Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.*" To this gracious promise of the Savior we shall now direct our devout attention in the second place.

2.

Hardly had the penitent malefactor ended his petition: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom", when Jesus gave him this gracious assurance: "*Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.*" That was not only a remarkable answer, but it was most remarkable, that Jesus gave him an answer at all. From the time He was taken captive in the garden of Gethsemane to this very moment, Jesus had spoken only a few times. When Caiaphas, the high priest, had asked Him concerning His doctrine and Messiahship, He answered by mere affirmation. When Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator, asked Him essentially the same question, He again answered by affirmation, speaking only a few words. When the women, who followed Him to Calvary, the place of His crucifixion, bewailed and lamented Him, He spoke to them, but not as any other would have spoken. And finally, when He had been nailed to the accursed tree of the cross, by four Roman soldiers, He spoke words of prayer for His enemies. But when the Jews accused Him before Pontius Pilate. He answered nothing. When the bribed witnesses testified against Him, He was silent, and had nothing whatever to say. When Pontius Pilate asked Him many other questions, besides the one already mentioned, He answered him not. When King Herod asked Him many questions, He gave Him no answer. When the multitude railed on Him, He had nothing to say. And here on Calvary the penitent malefactor had hardly ended his petition, to be remembered by Him when He had come into His kingdom, and He gives him an answer at once. Where, beloved friends, have we the key to this paradox? I answer, In the *believing* petition of the penitent malefactor. Had he not truly repented of his sins, Jesus would have given him no answer at all; He would have kept silent, as He did when the impenitent malefactor said to Him: "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us."

*"Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in para-*

*dise.*" Oh, gracious promise! The penitent malefactor had prayed: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom"; but Jesus gives him to understand that He will give him far more than he can ask or understand, for He says unto him: "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in *paradise*." Jesus will take him with Himself into *paradise*, that is, into heaven, into the place of eternal happiness and joy. He calls heaven *paradise*. Why? Because the penitent malefactor could understand Him better by this term. That was the name, the Jews gave to heaven. At least the common people would speak of heaven, as of a *paradise*. "Paradise, in the popular belief, was that of a far-off land of rest and peace, a region of the world of the dead. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were there, ready to receive their faithful descendants. To recline with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, to be in Abraham's bosom, was the Jew's mode of expressing the blessedness of the future state. In such blessedness, with Jesus, the dying robber is assured by the Savior, he shall be that very day." (Luth. Comm., 427). This word *paradise* the penitent malefactor understood very well, for he was a Jew, and therefore his soul rejoiced. He was to be in Abraham's bosom with Jesus, that very day. So he was quite sure that he would be eternally saved, for Jesus promised him *paradise* with a solemn oath. He said to him: "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in *paradise*." Today shall thy soul be carried by holy angels into Abraham's bosom. (See: Luke 16, 22; Matt. 8, 11.)

Aside from John 3, 16, where Jesus says: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," this passage in our text, this *second word* of Jesus spoken from the cross, is the most precious in the whole Bible. Many poor penitent sinners have found comfort and strength in it, in their dying hour. Yea, I dare say, that without it many would have been eternally lost.

This precious passage of God's Word, the Roman Catholic hierarchy (that is, the popes, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests, and monks) detests. Why? Because it is a strong refutation of the false and pernicious doctrine of *purgatory*. Papal Rome could not exist but for the damnable doctrine of *purgatory*. Papists always have perverted and distorted Scripture passages, if these would not serve their papistic fancies. This second word of



Jesus from the cross is not changed by Romanists in *spelling*, but in *punctuation*, and therefore the meaning is changed. Let us compare St. Luke's punctuation with that of the Roman Catholics! St. Luke: "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Roman Catholics: "Verily I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with Me in paradise." According to the Papists Jesus said to the dying robber: "I am speaking to thee today. Today I say unto thee, that thou shalt be with Me in paradise at some future time, after you have made amends for your crimes in purgatory, or after some of your friends have bought you free from the pains of purgatory. Your soul cannot enter heaven as it is." What a shameful perversion of the dear Savior's gracious promise! Shame, shame, shame upon such base perverters of God's Word! May God have mercy upon those poor people that are thus duped by godless men! The Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is a most pernicious and shameful scheme to rob the adherents of Romanism of their dollars, for remember, beloved friends, that Roman Catholics must pay the priests for the reading or singing of masses for the "repose of the poor souls in purgatory".

The second word of Jesus spoken from the cross is not only so very precious, because it proves that the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is a fabrication of cunning and godless men, but it is also so very precious, because it proves that sinful men are saved by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, without the deeds of the Law. The penitent and believing malefactor had been a great sinner. He had deserved not only temporal, but also eternal death, on account of his crimes. But he was saved through faith in Jesus Christ. "We therefore conclude," says St. Paul, "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law." (Romans 3, 28). And again he says: "For by grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2, 8, 9). There can be no denial of the fact, that sinful man is saved through faith in Jesus Christ, by the grace of God. That is the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. And the dying robber on the cross is proof, and proof enough for this blessed fact. The Pope and all false teachers in this world cannot change God's way of salvation. What God says, not what men say, is true. Every man that has ever been eternally saved was saved by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, without the deeds of the Law, that is without good works.

But, beloved fellow-Christians, it is also true that every true



believer in Jesus Christ will prove his faith by good works. Yea, he must prove his faith by good works, for Jesus Himself said: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5, 16). And His holy Apostle James writes that faith without good works is dead, and we all know that a dead faith cannot save. (James 2, 17). As soon as a sinner truly repents of his sins, and embraces Jesus Christ as his one and only Savior, so soon he will also prove by works of love, that he is converted. There is no exception from this rule. So it was also with this penitent and believing malefactor on the cross. As soon as he truly believed in Jesus Christ as in his Savior and Redeemer, he confessed Him before men, and he rebuked sin. Thus he *proved* that he was a true believer, a real believing Christian, and not a sham-Christian, a hypocrite.

The penitent and believing malefactor repented in his last hours, but it was not too late. It is true, so-called death-bed conversions are very, very *rare*, but they are *possible*. This blessed fact we should never forget. But, that man is surely a mad-man, who willfully postpones his conversion until his dying day. No man knows when and how he is going to die, and whether or not he will have an opportunity to truly repent in the last hours of his temporal life. Let none of us be numbered amongst such who are spiritually mad! Let this be our daily prayer:—

We pray Thee, O true God and Man,  
Who wast for our offenses slain:  
Save us from everlasting death,  
And cheer us when we yield our breath.

Amen.

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## The Last Will of Jesus for His People.

John 19, 25—27.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister \*, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

After the four Roman soldiers had executed the decree of Pontius Pilate, that is, after they had nailed Jesus of Nazareth to the accursed tree of the cross, they divided His personal belongings between themselves. According to Roman law the personal possessions of a crucified person went to the crucifiers as a reward for their bloody and gruesome work.

Jesus was poor in the things of this world. He Himself said at one time: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." All that He possessed were His garments and a coat, or gown (tunic). The teachers usually wore a gown as their official garb. Jesus, being the great Prophet come from God, and the great High Priest or Mediator between God and sinful men, also wore a coat or gown. It must have been very fine and costly, as it "was without seam, woven from the top throughout". It is not improbable that it was a gift of some of the pious women of Galilee who, as the evangelists tell us, had ministered unto Him. The four Roman soldiers, who had crucified Jesus, divided His garments between themselves in equal parts; but not so His gown. Perhaps they never before had crucified a man, who was in possession of such a beautiful and costly gown, and they knew that it was valuable, therefore they did not want to rend it; for by rending it in four parts it would have become almost worthless. St. John tells us: "They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be." And thus they did. If they should have done otherwise, Jesus could not have been the promised Messiah, therefore St. John says that through this act of the soldiers the

\* Salome, the mother of James and John. Some commentators hold that there were only three women: Mary, the mother of Jesus; Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the wife of Cleophas or Alphaeus. This may be correct, as the word *sister* in the original may also mean *sister-in-law*.

scripture was fulfilled which says: "They parted My raiment among them, and for My vestment they did cast lots."

Thus our dear Savior had been robbed of His last possessions. His crucifiers had taken everything away from Him that could be taken. But *one* thing they did not take from Him, yea, they could not take away from Him. What, then, beloved friends, was that, which they could not take away from Him? I answer, It was His love, — His divine love.

His *first word* from the cross manifested forth His love for His enemies; for He prayed for them: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." With His first word from the cross He had bequeathed the pardon of His heavenly Father to His crucifiers and all His enemies. O precious legacy! With His *second word* from the cross He bequeathed paradise, eternal life, to the penitent and believing malefactor; for He said unto him: "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." O precious legacy! His *third word* from the cross was a precious legacy to His dear mother Mary and His beloved disciple John, yea, to all of His people, — to all true believers. He said to His mother: "*Woman* \*, *behold thy son!*" And to John: "*Behold thy mother!*" This *third word* of our dear Savior from the cross shall now be the subject for our devout contemplation. In it we have before us His *last will or testament* for His people. Let us, then, direct our attention to:—

#### The Last Will or Testament of Jesus For His People.

We ask,

1. *Who, then, are His people?*
2. *How is His testament to be executed?*

#### 1.

Never before had a crucifixion been witnessed by such a vast multitude of people as the crucifixion of Jesus and the two malefactors on Calvary. It occurred at a time when the city of Jerusalem was crowded with Jews from all parts of the then known world. Vast multitudes had come for the celebration of the Pass-over. Jesus of Nazareth was known to almost all of them on account of His preaching and many miracles. His arrest, trial, and

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\* "In the language in which Jesus spoke, as well as in the Greek language, this term involves nothing contrary to respect and affection. In Dio Cassius, a queen is accosted by Augustus with this expression." Godet, Gospel of St. John, 347.

final sentence to the ignominious death upon the cross, had stirred all the people. Not only multitudes of men, but also many women, "daughters of Jerusalem", followed Jesus when He was led to the place of His crucifixion by the Roman soldiers. Perhaps all of them knew that Jesus was innocent of the crimes of which He was accused, but, nevertheless, the greater number of them rejoiced in His condemnation and crucifixion. Though the "daughters of Jerusalem" bewailed and lamented Him, yet they did not believe in Him as their Savior, and, therefore, Jesus told them, that they should not weep for Him, but rather for themselves and their children. Jesus wanted them to weep over their own and their people's sins, — He wanted them to repent. He does not care for the tears of unbelievers, lest they weep over their sins and repent.

Though the vast multitude rejected their Savior, there were also such amongst them, who truly believed in Him as their Savior, and followed Him because they *loved* Him. Most of these were women of Galilee, who had come to the city to celebrate the Passover. While Jesus was hanging on the cross in great agony, some of them stood near the cross, for St. John, who was present also, tells us in our text: "*Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother and His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*" Matthew and Luke tell us that there were many women of Galilee, who stood afar off. John, therefore, only mentions those women by their names, who were near the cross. But all of them truly loved Jesus, and would have gladly ministered unto Him, as they had formerly done, but they could not. It is not improbable that the soldiers would not permit them to come too near the cross, for they hated all those who loved Jesus.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, most probably recalled to her mind the prophetic words of old Simeon, which he had spoken when Jesus was presented in the Temple: "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce thy soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2. 34. 35). Perhaps His mother, who knew that He had all power in heaven and in earth, hoped that Jesus would perform a great miracle, and free Himself from the cross; but He did not. She sees Him as she never had seen Him before. She sees His many wounds, and yet, she is not permitted to offer Him any assistance; yea, she is not even permitted to speak a word to Him. She beholds Him in His unspeakable agony and distress, and she sees

that He voluntarily offers Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of sinful mankind. Oh, what grief must have been her lot, when she beheld Jesus in His unspeakably great agony! Indeed, old Simeon had told the truth. A sword of grief and pain now pierced her soul, as she stood near Jesus. When Joseph, her husband, had died, she still had Jesus, but now she must give Him up also! What will now be her lot without His filial love and care? She undoubtedly longed to hear at least one short word of consolation from His lips, but it seemed as though He had forgotten her altogether. He had already spoken twice; but not to her. Once for His enemies and crucifiers, praying for their forgiveness; and once to the penitent malefactor, promising him paradise. Oh, if He would only speak but *one word to her!* The omniscient Jesus, of course, knew all the thoughts of His mother's heart though she could not tell Him. But He had not forgotten her, nor any of His people. Presently it shall be His mother's privilege to hear a word from His lips, — *a word to her.* He calls out unto her: "*Woman, behold thy son!*" And then He says to His most beloved disciple John: "*Behold thy mother!*" Thus the dying Savior made His comforting testament for His people in their great bereavement. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." (John 13, 1).

But His own, His people, were not only His mother and John; no, His people were also those other women that stood afar off, (Matt. 27, 55; Luke 23, 49); yea, all of His disciples, for all those are His people, who believe in Him, and who willingly serve Him. When at a certain time His mother and His first cousins (the sons of Cleophas) wished to see Jesus, and when He was told that His mother and brethren wished to speak to Him, He answered and said: "Who is My mother? And who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." (Matt. 12, 48—50). And, so I ask, What is the will of His Father in heaven? Jesus Himself says: "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." And again St. John says: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8, 31, 32). So there cannot



be the least doubt whatever, that all believing Christians are His people, and Jesus loves them all, as He loved His mother and John. His last will or testament He made for all true Christians. But, beloved friends, how is His last will or testament to be executed? This question I shall now endeavor to answer in the second place.

2.

The last will or testament is never executed by the testator himself, but always by others, commonly called executors. When Jesus said to His mother: "*Behold thy son!*" and to John: "*Behold thy mother!*" He appointed John as the executor for that part of His testament which concerned His mother, and His mother as executrix for that part of His testament which concerned John. The sum of His last will is loving service to each other.

It is, therefore, the will of the dying Savior, that His people, the Christians, should love each other, and that they should execute the stipulations of His testament by serving one another in true Christian love. That this is true, we see from the words which He spoke to His apostles in His last discourses to them, before His suffering and death. He had not failed to make His last will for them. For, before He went out with them to the garden of Gethsemane, where His Great Passion was begun, He said to them: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13, 34, 35). In His last will or testament to all of His disciples He bequeathed to them the very same thing which He bequeathed to His mother and John in His third word from the cross, viz., *His love*. And He tells them, that they should therefore love each other, as He had loved them. Love manifests itself by its fruit. We cannot see love itself. We can only see love by its fruit, which is willing service to each other. By our service of love to one another all men shall know that we are true disciples of Jesus Christ.

It is, therefore, our dear Savior's will, that we Christians should execute His last will or testament by serving one another in true love. That is the way John understood Jesus, for we read in our text: "*And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home!*" And that is the way Mary, the mother of Jesus, also understood Him, for she willingly went with John. She had been bereft of Jesus' loving service. John, therefore, took her unto

himself into his own home. He provided for her, as a loving son would provide for his aged mother. He cared for her by loving service unto her demise which, according to tradition, occurred eleven years afterwards. And, on the other hand, the mother of Jesus also served John by loving service. It is not improbable, that she told him many things concerning Jesus; for he relates many things in his Gospel, which the other evangelists do not mention at all. Thus the mother of Jesus was of great service to John in his work of the compilation of his Gospel.

It is indeed very true, my beloved friends, that Jesus, the Son of God, could have provided for His mother without the agency of any human being; for all power is given Him in heaven and in earth. Indeed, He, who had satisfied the hunger of five thousand men, and, perhaps, as many women and children, with five loaves of barley bread and two fishes, yea, He, who had sustained about three millions of Israelites for forty years in the wilderness with bread from heaven,—He could have provided for His widowed mother in another way than by giving her into the loving care of His Apostle John. But that was not His will. He, who had bidden the ravens to supply His servant Elijah with food, yea, who had multiplied a handful of meal and a little oil of the widow at Zarephath for a long time, so that she, her son, and Elijah suffered no want,—He could have provided for His mother in a like miraculous manner. But that was not His will. If it were His will, He could provide for all of His people in a miraculous way, for with Him nothing is impossible. (Luke 1, 37). If He speaks and commands, then all creatures must obey Him, (Ps. 33, 9); for He is the omnipotent Son of God. But it is His will that His people should minister unto each other. They should love one another, as He loved them, and serve each other, as He served them. As His life was spent in loving service for His people, so they should also serve Him by serving one another in true Christian love. That is His last will or testament, and He has appointed all true Christians executors of His last will or testament, and it is, therefore, not only their *privilege*, but also their Christian *duty* that they execute His testament according to His instructions. St. John could not have remained a true disciple of Jesus Christ, if he should have neglected to execute His Savior's instructions. Thus it would be with us, beloved fellow-Christians, if we should neglect to do as Jesus bids us in His last will or testament. If we do not execute it according to His own instruc-

tions, then, of course, we are not His true disciples, for He said: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." On the great Day of Judgment Jesus will say to all those who executed His last will in a true Christian spirit: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungered, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? Or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? Or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Yes, by loving service His last will or testament is executed, and thus true faith becomes manifest.

How is it with us, my beloved fellow-Christians? Do we execute our dear Savior's last will or testament by willing service to one another in true Christian love? If we do, then, most beloved, we are His disciples indeed, for then we follow the instructions of our dear Savior, and thus we prove that we have true faith in Him.

May God give and keep us in true faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ unto our blessed end, for then we shall always gladly execute His last will or testament by loving Christian service to one another, and finally we shall receive the end of our Christian faith, even eternal life, bliss and happiness. And then we shall not only serve one another, but also Him, our adorable Savior, who suffered and died for us, because He loved us so much, in perfect love. God grant this for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

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## “My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?”

Matt. 27, 46.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

Our devout attention has already been directed to the first three words of our dear Savior spoken from the cross. His *first* word was one of compassionate intercession for His enemies, for He prayed: “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*” (Luke 23, 34). His *second* word was one of precious promise to the penitent and believing malefactor, for Jesus said unto him: “*Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.*” (Luke 23, 43). His *third* word was one of benevolent legacy to His mother and His disciple John,—yea, to all His people, when He said: “*Woman, behold thy son!*” “*Behold thy mother!*” (John 19, 26, 27).

Immediately after He had spoken His third word from the cross, St. John took Mary, the mother of Jesus, into his own house in the city of Jerusalem. (John 19, 27). It was about noon when they came home. While they were yet speaking of the loving Savior—of His unspeakable agonies and great love—, they noticed that the light of midday was suddenly changed into midnight darkness. And this darkness covered the whole land, St. Matthew tells us in the verse preceding our text, for he writes: “Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.” It was not a natural eclipse of the sun, because solar eclipses can occur only at the time of the new moon, when the sun and moon are in conjunction on the same side of the earth. (Lunar eclipses, on the other hand, always occur at the full moon, or when the sun and moon are in opposition, and are caused by the moon passing through the earth’s shadow.) This darkness was over all the *land*, says the holy evangelist. The word “land” in the original is “*gee*”, which may also mean the *earth*. Many commentators hold the opinion that this darkness covered the whole earth. At any rate it is certain that it was observed in Europe and Africa. Dionysius the Areopagite, an Athenian judge, who at that time was at Heliopolis in Egypt, is said to have cried out: “Either God Himself is suffering, and nature has compassion for Him, or the world is coming to an end.” And another heathen, Phlegon, at

Rome, tells us that "there was such a dense darkness, that noon was changed into midnight". He also mentions the great earthquake. These two men subsequently were converted to Christianity by the preaching of St. Paul. (Acts 17, 34. Romans 16,14).

During that dense darkness Jesus did not say anything. He now suffered the torments of eternal damnation of hell for sinful mankind. During those terrible hours Jesus was actually forsaken by His dear Father in heaven, for we read in our text: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" This awful cry from the very depths of hell was the fourth word of our dear Savior from the cross. Let us, then, most beloved fellow-Christians, now direct our devout attention to this distressing cry of the crucified Jesus:—

**"Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani? — My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?"**

I shall endeavor to show,

1. *That Jesus was actually forsaken by His heavenly Father.*
2. *Why Jesus was actually forsaken by His heavenly Father.*
3. *What important lessons we should learn from His forsakenness.*

1.

About the ninth hour of the day, or three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus cried out with a loud voice: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" Jesus uttered this awful cry shortly before His death on the accursed tree of the cross.

There are many people that do not believe that our dear Savior was actually forsaken by His heavenly Father. They say that it was altogether impossible for the Father to forsake His only-begotten Son in the hour of His sorest distress. And, indeed, it does seem impossible for the loving Father to forsake and abandon His only-begotten Son. But, nevertheless, it is divine truth that Jesus was actually forsaken by His Father during those awful hours. Jesus Himself says so, and that settles it. He cannot utter a falsehood; He cannot lie. His word is always true, for He is eternal Truth.

Many others say that Jesus was not actually forsaken by His Father, but that He only spoke those words in order to fulfill the prophecy contained in the twenty-second Psalm, which introduces



the awful suffering Messiah, crying: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? Why art Thou so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?" But they err. It is indeed true, that by His awful cry on the cross Jesus fulfilled this prophecy, but it is just as true, that He was actually forsaken by His Father, when He cried out His fourth word from the cross.

Of course, my beloved friends, we cannot comprehend what it really means to be forsaken by God. No man was ever forsaken by God in the real sense of the word, while he lived in this world. Only the lost in hell are forsaken, abandoned by God. If any man could come unto us from the very abode of the damned, he could tell us, what it is to be forsaken by God. When, therefore, the great Reformer of the Church, Dr. Martin Luther, at one time meditated upon this fourth word of Jesus, he studied for three days and nights, taking no food unto himself during all this time. And what were the final results of his profound studies and deep meditations? Listen! Luther cried out: "Forsaken by God? No man can understand what that means!" Thus it is. That Jesus Christ was forsaken by His heavenly Father is the greatest mystery. No one of us can understand what that really means. Yea, it was a great mystery even to the very Son of God Himself, when He had reached the bottom of His deepest humiliation, for He Himself asked: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

When our dear Savior struggled with *temporal* death in the garden of Gethsemane, when His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, (Luke 22, 44), He was not forsaken by His Father, for then His Father sent an angel to Him, who strengthened Him. But here on the accursed tree of the cross, when He struggled with *eternal* death, that is, with the tortures of hell, He was forsaken, abandoned by God, by His Father. How was that possible? Why did His Father forsake Him?

When Daniel called upon God from amidst the lions in a den to deliver him from those terrible beasts, God answered his prayer, and the next morning Daniel could say to King Darius: "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." And, furthermore, when King Nebuchadnezzar had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego cast into a fiery furnace, God answered their prayers by sending an angel, who protected them from the heat of the roaring furnace, so that not even a hair of their head was singed. (Dan. 3, 25—27). And yet, most

beloved friends, God forsakes His most beloved Son on the cross! Oh, how great that mystery! When Jesus left the bosom of His Father and became man, being born of the Virgin Mary, in a stable at Bethlehem, midnight was suddenly changed into midday, and all the holy angels appeared, and sang songs of praise and adoration unto Him; but now, when Jesus is about to die, the light of noonday suddenly turns into the darkness of midnight, and God, His dear Father in heaven, forsakes and abandons Him! Oh, what a mystery! The very Son of God Himself cries out with a loud voice: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" *Why, why, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* And, beloved friends, we also ask, Why was Jesus Christ forsaken, abandoned by His Father? This most important question I shall now endeavor to answer in the second place.

## 2.

When Jesus cried out: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" some of those men who were standing near Him, so it seems at least, did not understand the literal meaning of His words, for the evangelist tells us in the verse following our text: "Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias." Most probably they were Hellenistic Jews, who were not familiar with the ancient vernacular of the Hebrews; but the vast majority of those standing under the cross of Jesus, those that had been reared in Jerusalem, knew very well the meaning of Jesus' words. The cry "*Eli*", which they understood, and whose power they felt, was in derision interpreted as an appeal of the false Messiah to Elijah, who was expected to come with the Messiah. They imply that because God will not help Him, He puts His trust in man. (Jer. 17, 5). Of course, they did not understand *why* Jesus was being forsaken by God. Most probably they thought that He had been justly condemned and crucified; that He was a malefactor, and that for this reason God had abandoned Him.

I cannot tell you, dear fellow-Christians, what it is to be forsaken, abandoned by God. People very often complain that God had forsaken them. They say that God had abandoned them in their trials and tribulations. But they err; for no living man, — save the God-man Jesus Christ, — was ever forsaken by God in the real sense of the word, and, therefore, no living man is able to fully explain unto us what it means to be forsaken by God. But I can tell you why *Jesus* was forsaken by His heavenly Father.

when He was hanging on the cross. This I can tell you, because the Lord Himself has revealed it unto us in His Word. If we ask, Why was Jesus forsaken by His Father? the Bible answers, Because He was the representative of the whole sinful world. St. Peter says: "Christ His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." And St. Paul says: "He", that is, God the Father, "hath made Him", that is, Jesus Christ, "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we may be made the righteousness of God in Him." Yea, even Isaiah had prophesied of the Messiah: "Surely, He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." (Is. 53, 4. 5). When Jesus was hanging upon the cross, He was hanging there in our stead. What you and I should have suffered, He suffered for us. What you and I should have done and could not do, He did for us: He paid our debts, which we had with God. What you and I should have endured throughout eternity in hell, He endured for us during those three awful hours, when He was forsaken by His heavenly Father. These, my friends, are the real causes, why Jesus was forsaken by God. His Father dealt with Him as our substitute. Jesus stood in the place of sinful men, who had forsaken God, and, therefore, He so sorely felt the forsakenness by His Father. But, nevertheless, He clung to His Father, though He could not in this severe moment understand that forsakenness, for He still called God *His* God. He does not cry, "O God, O God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" No, He cries out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" His struggle here is far more difficult than that in the garden of Gethsemane. (Matt. 14, 34sq.). *Luther* says: "Here begins the contest and conquering of eternal hell and despair of God. Here God contends with God." Why? The Bible again answers, Because Jesus "is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

But, my friends, let me, in conclusion, also call your devout attention to the lessons we and all men should learn from the forsakenness of our dear Savior by His Father.

### 3.

"*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This fourth word of Jesus spoken from the cross, should teach us three very important lessons.

In the first place, this awful cry of our dear Savior should teach us, that *sin is something awful in the sight of the holy and just God*; for sin is a transgression of God's holy and just Law. St. John writes: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning," that is, he is the father of sin, because he introduced it into this world. (1 John 3, 8). Most people, even many of those who would be true Christians, imagine, that sin is only a human weakness, and that therefore God would not condemn a sinner on account of his sins. They say, "God will gladly overlook the shortcomings of sinful men." But they err. God does not say, that He will overlook the sins of men, that He will not punish men on account of their sins. No, God says something altogether different. He says: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek. 18, 20). And again He says: "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6, 23).

If sin were not such an awful crime against the holy and just God, then, beloved friends, Jesus, our Redeemer from sin, never would have been punished for our sins. Tell me, Do you really believe, that God should have forsaken His only-begotten Son, who came to redeem us from sin, if sin were only a human weakness, which He easily could have overlooked? People that think lightly of sin take pleasure in self-deception. They make light of the most stupendous work of their Savior. They belittle the awful sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. O my friends, do therefore not think lightly of sin, for sin is the greatest crime a man can commit against the holy and righteous God!

The second lesson we are to learn from the forsakenness of our Savior by His heavenly Father on account of our sins, is this, that we *should learn to shun sin, and battle against it as long as we live*. If you will not fight against sin, then, my friend, you cannot be a true Christian. How could you be God's child, if you loved sin? How could you love God and your Savior, if you rejoiced in sin, which you know, is an abomination in His sight, and which He abhors? The Word of God says: "If any man be in Christ, he is a *new* creature." And again it says: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." All those that *willfully* commit sin are God's enemies, and they crucify their Savior anew.

Of course, true Christians sin, they sin often, but *they do not want to sin*. As soon as a Christian realizes that he has sinned, he is sorry on account of his sins. He knows that he has offended

his loving Savior, who gave His life for him, that he might receive forgiveness of his sins. It wounds his heart to know that he has grieved His God and Savior. And therefore he approaches his God and Savior with a contrite heart over his sins, and asks Him for forgiveness. And that is pleasing unto God. God will forgive his sins for Jesus Christ's sake.

That, therefore, is the third important lesson which we should learn from the forsakenness of our dear Savior by His heavenly Father, *that we go to Him in true repentance as often as we have fallen into sin.* For that very reason Jesus became our Redeemer, that we might find forgiveness of our sins for His sake.

Every one, therefore, who acknowledges his sinfulness and is sorry on account of it, and goes to God for forgiveness, will not be turned down by Him. God will accept any and every one that comes to Him, and asks Him to forgive his sins for Jesus Christ's sake. It matters not what your past life has been, even though you were the greatest sinner on earth, if you will only truly acknowledge your sins unto God, and implore Him for forgiveness of your sins, for the sake of Jesus Christ, He will accept you as His dear child, and you will be eternally saved. God in His great mercy for Jesus' sake will never forsake you in time or in eternity, but He will take you unto Himself in heaven. All those sinners who accept the salvation, which Jesus Christ has wrought by His sufferings and death, will never be forsaken by God. This Gospel-truth the Bible teaches in many places.

Oh, glorious truth: Jesus has saved *all* sinners! May God help each and everyone of us, that we may believe this saving truth, and be eternally saved. May He do it for Jesus Christ's sake! **Amen.**

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## “I Thirst!”

John 19, 28, 29.

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, *I thirst!* Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth.

It is the chief characteristic of a true Christian, that he centers his heart upon Jesus, and not upon himself. A true Christian trusts in Jesus' work of redemption, and not in his own work. If we ask a true Christian, "Do you hope to be saved?" he will answer, "Yes, such is my hope." If we again ask him, "In whom, then, do you trust?" he will answer, "In my dear Lord Jesus Christ." And if we ask him once more, "What, then, has Christ done for you that you trust in Him?" he will answer, "He died for me, and shed His blood for me on the cross for the forgiveness of sins."

Every true Christian firmly believes that without Christ's bitter sufferings and ignominious death upon the cross, not a single human being ever could have been saved eternally; for without Christ's work of redemption not one sinful human being could have obtained forgiveness of his sins. A true Christian, therefore, knows of none who is more precious unto him than his dear Savior, nor does he hear of anything more eagerly than of his Savior's work of redemption. Jesus Christ and His work of redemption is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, of a true Christian's spiritual thoughts and conversation.

Indeed, a true Christian deeply deplores his sinfulness and his iniquities, on account of which his Savior had to suffer unspeakable pains in body and soul; but, nevertheless, he rejoices, because he knows that without these, neither he nor any other sinner ever could have been eternally saved. Nothing gladdens the heart of a true Christian as much as the Gospel-message that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." A true Christian rejoices with all his heart, when he hears that Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, became his Savior by giving Himself as a ransom for the sins of the sinful world. A true Christian, therefore, gratefully acknowledges the divine love of Jesus Christ, and he never wearies in grateful adoration of his Savior.

With all Christendom he daily turns to Jesus, and says from the very bottom of his heart:—

Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,  
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee!

The sufferings of our dear Savior were twofold: *physical* and *spiritual*, for He suffered unspeakable pains in His body and soul. The height of His sufferings was attained, when He uttered His *fourth* word from the cross: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” and His *fifth* word, which is recorded in our text, and which reads: “*I thirst!*” This fifth word of our dear Savior spoken from the cross shall now be the subject for our present meditation. By the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with our text, let me, then, most beloved fellow-Christians, now direct your thoughts to the fifth word of Jesus spoken from the cross:—

“*I Thirst!*”

We shall hear,

1. *For what He did thirst, and always will thirst to the end of this world; and*
2. *How His thirst was quenched, and how it always can be quenched by sinful men.*

1.

It was quite natural that Jesus, while He was hanging on the accursed tree of the cross, should have cried out: “*I thirst!*” At least eighteen hours had passed since He had received any refreshments at all. And oh, how exceedingly great were His sufferings in body and soul during those eighteen awful hours! Think of His great agony in the garden of Gethsemane, my dear friends, where His sweat was like drops of blood, falling to the ground. And after His capture in Gethsemane He had been bound and led away to the ex-highpriest Annas, and then to the highpriest Caiaphas, where the members of the Sanhedrin, or Jewish Council, were assembled together in order to pronounce judgment upon Him. During His arraignment before the Sanhedrin He had been maltreated by the Jewish rabble and the Roman soldiers. After the Sanhedrin had pronounced Him guilty of death, He was led away to the Praetorium, where Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, resided when he sojourned at Jerusalem. Pontius Pilate at first refused to confirm the death-sentence, which the Sanhedrin had pronounced upon Jesus, and he sent the Jews with Jesus to

King Herod Antipas, who had come to the city in order to celebrate the Passover. Herod Antipas and his soldiers mocked and abused Jesus, and sent Him back to the Roman governor. Pontius Pilate finally, yet very reluctantly, sentenced Jesus to be crucified. And immediately He, in company with two malefactors, was led to the place of crucifixion called Golgatha (Calvary), bearing His own cross. When He succumbed under its heavy weight, the soldiers forced a certain man from Cyrene, by the name of Simon, to help Him carry the cross to the top of the mount. Now four soldiers executed their bloody and gruesome work. They nailed Jesus to His cross, raised it up and fastened it in its socket. It is indeed true that they offered Jesus a drink of "wine mingled with myrrh"; but He refused to drink it. This mixture contained ingredients which stupefied those that drank it. It was the custom among the Jews to give this mixture to the crucified, so that they should not fully feel the unspeakable tortures of the crucifixion. After a little while the mixture would cause the crucified one to become unconscious. That is the reason Jesus refused to accept it. He wished to retain His consciousness to His end. He gladly would have received a drink from that vessel under His cross, of which the holy evangelist speaks in our text; but no one offered it to Him until He had cried out: "*I thirst!*" That was about the sixth hour after His crucifixion, or shortly before His death.

If we call to our minds all the hardships and intense sufferings which Jesus had endured during those awful eighteen hours, we can very well realize why He should have cried out: "*I thirst!*"

Yet more, my beloved friends. We all know that Jesus was our *substitute*. He suffered for us and for all sinful men. For our sake He was forsaken by His heavenly Father, while He was hanging upon the cross. God had made Him to be sin for us. (2 Cor. 5, 21). His unspeakable thirst, therefore, was not merely a natural one, as we also sometimes experience it. No, when Jesus was hanging upon the accursed tree of the cross, as all sinners' substitute, He also suffered the physical thirst of the lost in hell. Of course, we cannot realize the awfulness of this thirst, but we know from the Holy Scriptures, that it is unspeakably great. That this is true, we learn from what Jesus said of the rich man in hell. Of him Jesus said: "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and

cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." (Luke 16, 23. 24). Exactly the same torments, caused by unspeakable thirst, Jesus suffered when He cried out: "*I thirst!*" Even as He suffered the anguish of the lost souls in hell, when He cried out: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" so He suffered the unspeakable physical thirst of the lost in hell, when He cried out: "*I thirst!*"

But, my dear friends, Jesus longed not only for a quenching of His great physical thirst when He cried out: "*I thirst!*" He longed also for the completion of His work of redemption for a lost sinner-world. And how great this spiritual thirst of Jesus must have been, we can only surmise.

You, father or mother, perhaps, have a child that you dearly love. The child you so dearly love, and whose eternal happiness you long for, has turned his back upon the Savior, and is now associating himself with the ungodly and worldlings. You know that your child is eternally lost, lest he truly repents. Oh, how you do thirst for his eternal salvation! Or, my friend, you, perhaps, have a father, or mother, or brother, or sister, or near relative, who is running madly and blindly into everlasting perdition. Oh, how often have you been entreating with this your beloved one for his salvation, but so far to no avail. All your entreaties and pleadings have fallen on deaf ears and a stony heart. You, perhaps, have been entreating and pleading with your beloved one for years, and you are doing it to this very day. Why? Because you love him, and you thirst for his eternal salvation.

You and I can love only with a human love. Now let us think of our Savior, who loved and still loves all sinners with divine love! How great must have been His thirst for the eternal salvation of sinful mankind! He Himself has said, that He came into this world to seek and save that, which was lost. (Matt. 18, 11). In order that His divine thirst for all sinners' salvation might be quenched, Jesus did not only come down from heaven and became man, but He also gave Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of all men. His unspeakable thirst. His divine longing, for the salvation of all humankind, prompted Him to endure all those unspeakable tortures in His soul and body. Surely, that was far more than human love! It was divine love, love which passes all human understanding. We must surely confess with the Christian poet, saying unto Jesus:—

Jesus! Prince of Peace,  
Long'st for my release:  
As Thou cried, "I thirst! I thirst!"  
From the tree by God accurst;  
Long'st for my release,  
Jesus! Prince of Peace.

And as He longed for the salvation of all sinners when He was hanging on the cross, so He to this very day longs, craves, thirsts for the eternal salvation of every individual sinner.

How was His thirst quenched while He was hanging upon the accursed tree of the cross, and how can it still be quenched by sinful men? This question I shall now endeavor to answer in the second place.

## 2.

The holy evangelist says in our text: "*Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth.*"

This drink was not the same which was offered to Jesus about six hours before. This drink had no stupefying effects. It was the common drink for the soldiers, which they called "posca". It contained water, sour wine and beaten eggs. This drink Jesus accepted. By it He was refreshed. Now His unspeakable physical thirst had been somewhat quenched.

But, beloved friends, as I have already said, Jesus longed not only for a quenching of His physical thirst, but also for the quenching of His spiritual thirst, that is, for the completion of His work of redemption, -- for the eternal salvation of sinful mankind. He longed, craved, thirsted for that moment to come in which He should be able to cry out in victory: "It is finished!" And His longing was now to be realized, for presently His great work of redemption was to be finished.

Indeed, it was most refreshing for Jesus, when He thought of the fact that presently the Scriptures were to be fulfilled; that presently mankind's debts were to be blotted out forever; that presently the gates of heaven were to be opened for sinful, but redeemed men.

My dear friends, Jesus does not suffer any physical thirst since He cried out from the cross: "*I thirst!*" He now lives in His state of exaltation. With His death and burial He forever concluded His state of humiliation. But, nevertheless, He, in His state of exaltation, thirsts for the salvation of every individual sinner. And for this reason He has His Gospel preached to sinners.



It is His will that *all* sinners should become aware of the blessed fact that He has saved them from sin, death, and eternal damnation by His bitter sufferings and death upon the cross. For this very reason He extends His gracious invitation to all sinners by His Gospel-call: "Come; for all things are now ready!" (Luke 14, 17). "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11, 28). He also has invited you, my dear friend, to come unto Him, for He also thirsts for your eternal salvation.

And if you ask, How can I quench this thirst of Jesus? I answer, You can do it by true repentance. If you acknowledge your sinfulness with a contrite heart, and if you put your trust in Jesus' work and righteousness, or, in other words, if you become a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Oh, that Jesus' thirst for our eternal salvation might be quenched by every one of us by daily repentance!

Perhaps, beloved fellow-Christians, the thought has come to some of you, that you should be exceedingly joyful, if you had been permitted to do for Jesus what that soldier did, when he gave a drink unto the Savior while He was hanging on the cross. Perhaps you say, Oh, that I would have such an opportunity to serve Jesus, as he had! Oh, that I should be counted worthy to serve Him, who gave His life for me that I might live eternally!

It is true, that soldier performed a good deed when he gave Jesus that drink. But, my friend, will you believe me, when I tell you that you have the very same opportunity and privilege to do good unto the dear Savior of the world? Are you really willing to serve Jesus? Are you longing to do something for Him, who suffered and died for you? Do you answer, Indeed, I shall gladly serve Him, if I only have a chance to do so! You have such a chance, my dear friend. If you will take your Bible and read the twenty-fifth chapter according to St. Matthew, you will find these words of Jesus recorded in the fortieth verse: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Whenever we feed the hungry, give drink unto the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the sick, or if we do anything to a suffering and needy fellow in the name of Jesus Christ, we do it unto Him. Now I ask you, Have we not many opportunities to do good to all men, especially unto them, who are of the household of faith? (Gal. 6, 10). Indeed, such opportunities are not wanting. Oh, beloved fellow-Christians, let us, then, not waste nor neglect such blessed opportunities!

Let us not forfeit such gracious privileges by coldhearted inactivity!

And, furthermore, how great is not the spiritual need of so many millions of men! Oh, let us be more diligent in our mission work! Through our mission work we can quench the spiritual thirst of our dear Savior. And He greatly rejoices over every sinner who truly repents. And lo, how shall we also rejoice with Him, when we shall surround Him in His glory in everlasting bliss and happiness in the eternal house of the Father, not made with hands! Yea, beloved fellow-Christians, let us serve Him, who suffered and died for us, with a willing heart unto our blessed end. With the grateful poet let each one of us lift up our heart unto the dear Savior and say:—

Savior! Thy dying love  
Thou gavest me,  
Nor should I aught withhold,  
Dear Lord, from Thee;  
In love my soul would bow,  
My heart fulfill its vow,  
Some off'ring bring Thee now,  
Something for Thee.

All that I am and have—  
Thy gifts so free—  
In joy, in grief, through life,  
Dear Lord, for Thee!  
And when Thy face I see,  
My ransomed soul shall be,  
Through all eternity,  
Something for Thee.

So help us God, for the sake of the bitter sufferings and ignominious death of His beloved Son, our one and only Savior and Redeemer! Amen.

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## “It Is Finished!”

John 19, 30.

When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished.

St. Paul writes, Galatians 4, 4. 5: “When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to *redeem* them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” That St. Paul wrote the truth, when he wrote thus to the Galatian Christians, we know from the words of Jesus Himself. Jesus Himself said: “The Son of Man is come to *save* that which was lost.” (Matt. 18, 11). And again He said, speaking to Nicodemus: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be *saved*.” (John 3, 16. 17).

From these words of Jesus and His holy apostle we can see that Jesus came into this world for a very special purpose, namely, to redeem and save sinners. This work His heavenly Father had entrusted to Him, and this work He wanted to finish, or with other words, He wanted to save all men from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

The devil tried his very best to keep Jesus from finishing this great work. Hardly had Jesus been born in that lowly stable at Bethlehem, when he prompted King Herod the Great to seek the destruction of the Babe of Bethlehem. When he failed in his wicked endeavors, he did not give up hopes. When Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness of Judah, and, therefore, was very hungry, the devil tried to plant the seed of distrust against God the Father in the heart of Jesus, so that He might not finish the work entrusted to Him. The devil again failed, but he did not give up hopes of felling Jesus before He should have finished that great work. Repeatedly he instilled into the Jews such hatred against Jesus, that they tried to kill Him before He should be able to do that work. Yea, the devil even tried to prevent this work a few days before Jesus finished it. When, for instance, Jesus told His disciples, that He had to suffer and die for the redemption of the sinful and lost world, the devil tried to keep Jesus from going up to Jerusalem, for through Simon

Peter he said to the Savior: "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee." (Matt. 16, 22).

Notwithstanding all these efforts of the devil, Jesus did finish that work, as we see from our text. Our text tells us that Jesus, after He had received the vinegar (posca), cried out from the cross: "*It is finished!*" This was our dear Savior's *sixth* word which He spoke from the cross. It was a cry of victory over all His enemies. He now had accomplished that great work, which His Father had entrusted unto Him. This sixth word of Jesus shall now be the subject for our sacred meditation. In accordance with our text, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, let me now direct your attention to the sixth word of Jesus from the cross: —

**"It Is Finished!"**

Let me show,

1. *What now was finished, and*
2. *How we may appropriate the results of the finished work of Jesus unto ourselves.*

**1.**

What was finished, my beloved friends, when Jesus cried out from the cross: "*It is finished!*" I answer, In the first place, all the prophecies concerning Himself and His work of redemption were fulfilled.

As we know, God in His wisdom did not only foresee the Fall, but He also resolved to redeem fallen man. When, therefore, Adam and Eve had fallen away from God, He in His gracious kindness promised to redeem mankind by sending His only-begotten Son as the Savior of fallen mankind. He made this gracious promise, when He said to the seducer of Adam and Eve in paradise: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." (Gen. 3, 15). The great comfort which was contained in this gracious promise was not intended for the devil, but for fallen mankind. God promised that the Seed of the woman, that is, His only-begotten Son, the Messiah, should restore that, which man had lost by his fall into sin. And God repeatedly made similar promises by the mouth and pen of His prophets. For this very reason Jesus said to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24, 25, 26). And the

Evangelist Luke adds: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." And every one of you, who has some knowledge of the prophecies of the prophets and the sacred history of our dear Savior's earthly life, sufferings and death, will readily admit, that all that, which Jesus suffered, was a fulfillment of the prophecies of the Jewish prophets concerning the Messiah. When Jesus, therefore, uttered His cry of victory from the cross: "*It is finished!*" He meant to say in the first place, that all the prophecies concerning Himself had now been literally fulfilled.

In order that the prophecies of the prophets might be fulfilled, Jesus had to suffer very much. We know from the Holy Scriptures, how much He had to suffer. His whole sojourn here upon earth was nothing less than a life of suffering. From His birth to His death He was a man of suffering. And especially great were His sufferings during those eighteen hours prior to His death on the cross. We can form an idea of the awfulness of His sufferings in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross, when we call to our minds the fact, that He sweated blood, and that He cried out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 26, 47). It was awful what He had to suffer in order to finish that work, which He had come to do. And when all His unspeakable sufferings had come to an end, His heart was filled with great joy, and in His joy He cried out that mighty cry of triumph and victory: "*It is finished!*" His agonies of soul, and His pains of body had now come to an everlasting end. And that was what He meant in the second place, when He called out triumphantly from the accursed tree of the cross: "*It is finished!*"

Furthermore, when Jesus uttered that cry of victory, not only all the prophecies concerning Himself, nor only all the sufferings which He had to endure were finished, but also the great work of redemption was completed. When Jesus cried out from the cross: "*It is finished!*" the redemption of sinful mankind was an established fact. And this fact especially is so very comforting to us. Now the just and righteous God had been reconciled to all sinners. The righteousness that alone avails before God was now established for all sinful men. Sin, death, and hell were now overcome. The gates of heaven, which had been closed to man after the Fall, were again opened unto him; yea, heaven and earth were once more united. Oh, glorious word, that word of great victory out of the mouth of Jesus from the cross: "*It is finished!*"



When this cry of victory was heard in the blissful abode of the holy angels, they rejoiced and sang doxologies unto the Victor on Calvary. They never had been able to grasp the plan of salvation, which God had devised in His infinite wisdom and gracious heart. When they, therefore, saw the Son of God in His awful agonies in the garden of Gethsemane, and when they beheld His bloody sweat as it fell down to the ground, they trembled, and knew not what to say. Yea, when they heard that awful cry of distress ring out from the cross: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" they were at a loss to understand such words out of the mouth of Him, at whose whisper the demons fled, and the dead arose from their graves. God forsaken by God! How could that be possible! Here were mysteries above all mysteries for the holy and wise angels. And now all at once, while they were still wondering what all the intense suffering of the Savior could mean, they heard a new cry reverberate throughout their heavenly mansions not made with hands. It was a cry of victory. They could not understand how it all happened, but, nevertheless, they knew that it was true, for it came out of the mouth of Him, who is truth personified. Oh, how they did rejoice, when that cry of victory: "*It is finished!*" filled the heavens.

And, my dear friends, believe me, the very gates of hell were shaken when that cry of victory filled even the remotest recesses of the demon-world! When Jesus, a few moments before, had lamented in His unspeakable sufferings: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?— My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" the demon-world went wild with devilish joy, and, most assuredly, the hosts of hell made arrangements for a great celebration of their victory over the crucified Son of God; but they had miscalculated the status quo. While they busied themselves with hasty preparations for the great frolic, which they intended to have, then, suddenly, like a flash from a clear sky the exultant cry came from the cross on Calvary: "*It is finished!*" The crucified Jesus had been victorious. The Lion of Judah had won the victory. The old serpent's head had been crushed by the Seed of the woman; yea, Messiah had triumphed over all His infernal enemies.

Indeed, my beloved fellow-Christians, when Jesus shouted His cry of victory from the cross, all sinners had been truly redeemed from sin, death, and the power of the devil; all sinners had been reconciled to God; the gates of heaven had again been opened unto

them, which by their fall had been closed. Such were the great and far-reaching results of our dear Savior's victory.

But, in the second place, let us also hear, how we poor sinners can appropriate the results of our Savior's victory unto ourselves.

## 2.

Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of all sinful men. When He cried out from the cross: "*It is finished!*" then all sinful men, mankind, had been fully redeemed. And yet, beloved friends, many of the redeemed, yea, most of them, are nevertheless eternally lost. Why? Why are so many eternally lost, notwithstanding the fact that all have been redeemed by Jesus Christ? Why do not all the redeemed share in the great blessings of the Victor on Calvary? The answer is, Because not all the redeemed accept Jesus as their Redeemer and Savior, and therefore do not appropriate unto themselves the glorious results of Jesus' finished work.

How, then, can sinful man appropriate the finished work of Jesus unto himself? The only correct answer to this all-important question, God alone can give, and He gives it in His Gospel. He tells us, that we can share in Christ's victory and become partakers of the same, if we truly *believe* in Jesus Christ. It was by *faith* in the Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ, that ever a sinner was eternally saved. Already during the time of the Old Testament, all those who were eternally saved, were saved by faith in Him, the promised Messiah. All those who believed God's promises concerning the Messiah were saved. By faith they appropriated unto themselves the salvation which the promised One was to accomplish through His work of redemption. And to this very day, all those who are eternally saved, are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, the one and only Savior of sinners. Only by faith in Him can we appropriate the results of His finished work of redemption. The Savior Himself said to Nicodemus: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned." (John 3, 15—18). And for this very reason His holy Apostle Paul writes to the Roman Christians: "We conclude that a man is jus-

tified by faith without the deeds of the Law.” And to the Ephesian Christians he writes: “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.” Not by the works of the Law, not by our good works, can we appropriate the results of our dear Savior’s finished work of redemption unto ourselves, but by faith only. He that does not believe in Jesus Christ, that does not trust in Him alone and in His work of redemption, cannot be eternally saved. Those, who do not believe in Him, bring upon themselves swift destruction, (2 Pet. 2, 1), they are eternally lost.

And now, my dear friend, let me ask you one question. Pray tell me, how is it with you? There cannot be the least doubt about the fact that you have been truly redeemed by Jesus Christ, for when He cried out from the cross that cry of victory: “*It is finished!*” then your redemption was, indeed, an accomplished fact. As He came to seek and save the lost, the sinners, so there cannot be the least doubt about it, that He came to save you, because you are a sinner. But, my dear friend, have you appropriated to yourself the results of His great work of redemption by true faith in Him? Do you really rejoice in the great fact that you have a Savior from sin, death, and eternal damnation? Oh, blessed are you, if you do.

But let me warn you against self-deception! If you say, that you truly believe in Jesus Christ as your one and only Savior, then you must also serve Him in true holiness of life. You must gladly hear the Gospel preached; you must frequently partake of His Holy Supper; you must be in daily communication with Him in your prayers; you must persistantly battle against all sins and iniquities: against your own evil heart, against the wicked world, and against the temptations of the wily devil; you must not knowingly and willfully live in sin and wickedness. If you really believe in Jesus Christ and His work of redemption, then you cannot do otherwise than love and honor Him, who suffered and died for you. Therefore, my dear friend, truly examine yourself, whether or not you really love Jesus with all your heart; whether you put all your trust in Him and in His work of redemption! Examine yourself, whether or not you really serve Him with a willing and cheerful heart, and whether or not you honor Him by a truly Christian life! A mere lip-service will not avail before Him. He wants your heart. If you give Him your heart, then you give Him all that He asks of you, and then you are a true Christian indeed.

And when your last hour is at hand, and when you must struggle with sin, death, and the devil, then you can triumphantly say with St. Paul: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave (hell), where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Cor. 15, 55—57). And turning to Jesus you can gratefully say to Him with the Christian poet Paul Gerhardt:—

My burden, in Thy passion,  
Lord, Thou hast borne for me,  
For it was my transgression  
Which brought this woe on Thee.  
I cast me down before Thee,  
Wrath were my rightful lot;  
Have mercy, I implore Thee,  
Redeemer, spurn me not!

Thanks from my heart I offer  
Thee, Jesus, dearest Friend,  
For all that Thou didst suffer;  
My good didst Thou intend.  
Ah! grant that I may ever  
To Thy truth faithful be;  
When soul and body sever,  
May I be found in Thee!

Amen.

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## “Father, Into Thy Hands I Commend My Spirit!”

Luke 23, 46.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit; and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.

It is not merely poetry, but an undeniable fact which a Christian hymnologist expressed, when he said, —

Hark! a voice saith, All are mortal!  
Yea, all flesh must fade as grass.

Every rational person is well aware of the fact that all sinful men must die sometime. Since the Fall, sin entered into this world, and death by sin; for the wages of sin is death. (Rom. 6, 23). Therefore the Epistle to the Hebrews says: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Yes, all sinful men must die. There is no one who is able to keep temporal death away from himself. No one can bribe death. Death comes to all — sooner or later. Death takes the babe out of the arms of his loving mother; it takes the lively and gay maiden from the midst of her associates; it lays low the robust youth as well as the old man. Yes, “All are mortal.”

What the Lord said to King Hezekiah by the mouth of His servant Isaiah, viz., “Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.” He also speaks to every human being living upon this earth; for every sickness which takes hold of you, my dear friend, tells you, “Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die;” every corpse which you behold, tells you that you will also be a corpse some day; every funeral procession which you see, reminds you of the fact that sooner or later people will also carry you out to the cemetery to lay your body away in the grave. Yes, indeed, it is an undeniable truth, that all sinful men must die.

But a few moments ago we have sung, —

O sorrow dread!  
Our God is dead,  
But by His expiation  
Of our guilt upon the cross  
Gained for us salvation.

O darkest woe!  
Ye tears, forth flow!  
Has earth so sad a wonder?  
God the Father's only Son  
Now is buried yonder!

And, again, my dear friends, this is not merely poetry, but a fact, a divine truth. When Jesus of Nazareth died on the accursed tree of the cross on Calvary, then the very Son of God, the Prince



of Life, died. This fact all unbelievers deny, but their denial does not at all change truth, divine truth.

That Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the very Son of God, and that He gave His life for sinful men, in order to save and redeem them from all sins, from death, and eternal damnation, we learn also from His *last* word, which He spoke from the cross. By the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with our text, let me, then, my beloved friends, now answer the important question:

**What Does the Seventh or Last Word of Jesus: "Father, Into Thy Hands I Commend My Spirit," Teach?**

I answer,

1. *That Jesus voluntarily died for the sinful world, and*
2. *That all those, who believe in Him, can die cheerfully, because they shall be eternally saved.*

1.

St. Luke tells us in our text: "*And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit; and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.*"

"*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!*" This was the very last word which Jesus spoke while He was hanging upon the cross. To this last word of our dear Savior we are indebted to St. Luke, for he is the only evangelist who mentions it. St. Matthew and St. Mark also tell us that Jesus cried out with a loud voice just before He gave up the ghost, but they do not tell us, what it was that He said.

From this very last word of Jesus it is evident, that He died for the sinful world, not because *He had to do it*, but because *He wished to do so*; He died for us *voluntarily*. If Jesus had not voluntarily died for sinful men, if He had not been willing to suffer and die for them, then, my beloved friends, no power in heaven, or on earth, or in hell would have been capable to force Him into death. That this is indeed true, we can see from the accounts which the holy evangelists give us of His capture in the garden of Gethsemane. When in Gethsemane, the servants of the chiefs of the Jews, and the Roman soldiers which had gone with them to capture Jesus of Nazareth, laid their hands upon Him, then Peter drew his sword, and he cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant, whose name was Malchus. Then Jesus said to Peter: "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the

sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. 26, 52—54). Even so, when He was hanging upon the cross, He could have called to His assistance more than twelve legions of angels. Yea, even more! He Himself could have left the cross, if He had so willed it, without the assistance of the holy angels, for with Him nothing is impossible. When He was hanging upon the accursed tree of the cross, He was as powerful as ever, for He is the almighty Son of God. From all this we learn that Jesus did not have to die, but that He wanted to die. He voluntarily suffered and died for the sinful and lost world. He Himself had told the unbelieving Jews: "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John 10, 17, 18). Thus it was as we see from our text, for St. Luke says: "*And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit; and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.*" That was not at all natural, my beloved friends. Such a thing never happened just before death would take away a crucified person. The natural powers of the crucified ones would finally give out altogether, so that a crucified person, just before he passed away, was hardly able to whisper. But not so with Jesus. Before He passed away, so our text tells us, He cried with a *loud voice*: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!" And for this very reason the holy evangelist tells us in the verses following our text: "Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous Man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned." The Roman centurion, who had seen many a crucified person die upon the accursed tree of the cross, and all the people, who were standing about the cross of Jesus, had often seen crucified persons die, but never did it occur, that any one of them died crying out with a *loud voice*, and for this reason, the people were at a loss to understand why Jesus could thus cry out with a loud voice, just before He gave up the ghost. That is the reason why they smote their breasts. By doing that, they acknowledged that Jesus was indeed more than an ordinary personage. And the Roman centurion said: "Certainly this was a righteous

Man," and, as the other evangelists tell us, he also said: "Truly, this was the Son of God!" And the centurion spoke thus, because he knew what he was saying, for he was a specialist in all matters pertaining to crucifixions. So there cannot be the least doubt about it, that Jesus died on the cross because He *wanted to die*; He died voluntarily for sinful mankind. He had power to give His life, and to take it again at His own choosing; He could do as He pleased.

But, beloved friends, the last word of our dear Savior, which He spoke while He was hanging upon the cross, does not only prove that He died voluntarily for us and all sinful men, but it also proves, that all those who truly believe in Jesus Christ, can die right cheerfully, because they shall be eternally saved. Of this I shall now speak to you in the second place.

## 2.

Very appropriately says Luther: "We Christians must know that, if God be not with us in the scales of justice, we must sink to the very bottom. This I mean to say, If we could not truthfully say that God died for us, but only a man, we would be eternally lost."

Jesus of Nazareth did not die for His own sake, but He died for our sake, as the Bible everywhere assures us. He died for *all* sinners in order that all might be eternally saved, as St. Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians, saying: "He died for all, that they which live should henceforth not live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. 15, 5). And to the Roman Christians he wrote: "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5, 8). And in the Epistle to the Hebrews it is said: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of the flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Hebr. 2, 14, 15). St. Athanasius, the great defender of the deity of Jesus, in the fourth century makes this comment on these words, saying: "Like a bee, when it thrusts its sting into a hard substance, wounds itself and loses its sting, so death, when it sent its sting into the Rock of Ages, lost all its power." And St. Bernhard said: "Through His death Jesus Christ overcame our death."

Whosoever, therefore, truly believes in Jesus Christ shall see the fulfillment of this precious promise of Jesus: "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." (John 11, 25, 26). Whosoever truly believes in Jesus Christ can truthfully say with all his heart:—

For me to live is Jesus,  
To die is gain for me,  
To Him I gladly yield me,  
And die right cheerfully.  
  
From hence I go with gladness  
To Christ my Brother's side,  
That I may soon be with Him,  
And e'er with Him abide.

Indeed, beloved fellow-Christians, Christ's death is our life, our eternal life. Without His death there would be no eternal life in store for anyone of us.

Of course, this precious doctrine of the Bible is derided by all unbelievers. They absolutely refuse to believe that through Christ's death all men were saved from sin, death, and condemnation. They ridicule us Christians as people who believe and trust in a "crucified Jew". They take it for granted that we Christians are nothing more, nor less, than sophists and fools, not at all deserving of their respect.

But, beloved fellow-Christians, let unbelievers and scoffers deride us as much as they can. When death comes to them, and when the icy hands of death lays hold on them, they will not think of scoffing and deriding believing Christians; no, then, like that great scuffer Voltaire, they will despair and join the hosts of scoffers and devils in hell; they will be eternally lost: eternally damned. The Savior Himself has said, and we know that He cannot lie, that he that believeth not in Him shall be damned. (Mark 16, 16). Oh, what a terrible lot awaits all unbelievers and scoffers in the hereafter!

But blessed are all they who truly believe in Jesus Christ, and cling to Him by true faith in life and in death, for they shall not be put to shame! When death comes unto them, and lays his cold hands upon them, staring them in their face with that ugly grin of his, they need not fear, but they can then truthfully say, "Death, where is thy sting? It is gone. I fear thee not. Ah, death, I have Him for my Friend, who overcame thee!" They can contentedly say:—

I fall asleep in Jesus' wounds,  
There pardon for my sins abounds;  
Yea, Jesus' blood and righteousness  
My jewels are, my glorious dress,  
Wherein before my God I stand  
When I shall reach the heavenly land.

With peace and joy I now depart,  
God's child I am with all my heart;  
I thank thee, death, thou leadest me  
To that true life where I would be.  
So cleansed by Christ I fear not death.  
Lord Jesus, strengthen Thou my faith!

Thus uncounted multitudes of true Christians have faced grim death, and have overcome him. Thus also Luther, the great Reformer of the Church, cheerfully gave up his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father, when death took him hence. Folding his hands, he prayed thrice the words of the Psalmist: "Into Thine hand I commit my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God!" And having said this, he fell asleep in Jesus.

Asleep in Jesus! blessed sleep,  
From which none ever wakes to weep;  
A calm and undisturbed repose,  
Unbroken by the last of foes.

Asleep in Jesus! Oh, how sweet,  
To be for such a slumber meet;  
With holy confidence to sing  
That death has lost his venom'd sting.

Let us, therefore, my well-beloved fellow-Christians, not be deceived by the idle talk of the unbelievers and scoffers who, considering themselves wise, have become fools. Let us always look to the cross on Calvary, to Him who died that we might live. Let us ever and anon listen to His Seven Words which He spoke from the cross. They will unfailingly strengthen our faith in Him, give unto us power to overcome sin, death, and the power of the Evil One. And in our last hour let this be our prayer:—

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,  
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies:  
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

Amen.



## Remarkable Evidences in Nature that Accompanied the Death of Jesus.

Matt. 27, 50—56.

Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly, this was the Son of God! And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him; among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

Thinking of the incarnation of God's only-begotten Son, the holy Apostle Paul cries out in his First Epistle to Timothy: "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: *God was manifest in the flesh!*" Yes, indeed, Jesus Christ, the God-man Savior of the lost sinner-world, is the greatest mystery of all mysteries, for in the person of Jesus Christ the divine and the human nature are united. Jesus Christ is, and always will be, the most wonderful being. (1 Pet. 1, 12).

Jesus being God manifest in the flesh, the most wonderful of all beings, it was only natural, that I may say so, that He should have performed many great signs and wonders, many miracles. This He did. Even His very first miracle recorded in the Holy Scriptures was a great one, for, by the power of His will, He changed water into wine. It was a great miracle, when He, by the power of His word, stilled the great tempest on the Sea of Galilee. It was, furthermore, a great miracle, when He fed about five thousand men, and, perhaps, as many women and children, with five loaves of bread and two small fishes in a wilderness, and that, after all had been fed, twelve baskets with fragments remained over. Yea, He even raised up the dead, by the power of His word. (Luke 7, 11—17; Matt. 9, 18—26; John 11, 1—46). If I should enumerate unto you, my beloved friends, all the miracles which Jesus performed while He was upon earth, I could not do it in a few hours. And then I should be able to tell you only of those of His miracles which are recorded in the Bible. He, however, performed

many more than are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, for St. John writes in the last verse of his Gospel: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." And all the miracles which Jesus performed, He performed by *His own inherent power*. It was not thus with the prophets and apostles, for they did not perform a single miracle by their own power.

In Second Kings (chapter 13, 20, 21) the inspired writer relates this remarkable incident: "And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulcher of Elisha; and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet." The Lord had performed a miracle, to teach respect for His great Prophet Elisha. If such a thing happened in honor of Elisha, then, surely it could not at all appear out of place that God should show His personal interest and paternal grief at the death of His only-begotten Son. This is exactly what He did, as we learn from the words of our text. By the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with our text, let me call your devout attention to:—

### **The Remarkable Evidences in Nature That Accompanied the Death of Jesus Christ.**

We shall learn,

1. *What miracles occurred at the time of the dear Savior's death;*
2. *What influence they exerted upon those people that witnessed them.*

#### **1.**

St. Matthew tells us in our text: "*Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many.*"

Before Jesus yielded up His spirit into the hands of His heavenly Father, from noon until about three o'clock, just before He died, a great miracle had already occurred, for St. Matthew says in verse 45: "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness

over all the land unto the ninth hour." The light of midday was suddenly changed into midnight darkness. This darkness covered the whole land. It was not a natural eclipse of the sun, because solar eclipses can occur only at the time of the new moon, when the sun and moon are in conjunction on the same side of the earth. This darkness, moreover, was over all the *land*, he tells us. The word "land" in the original is "gee", which may also mean the *earth*. Many commentators hold the opinion that this darkness covered the whole earth. At any rate it is certain that it was observed in Europe and Africa. Dionysius the Areopagite, an Athenian judge, who at that time was at Heliopolis in Egypt, is said to have cried out: "Either God Himself is suffering, and nature has compassion for Him, or the world is coming to an end!" And another heathen man, Phlegon, at Rome, tells us that "there was such a dense darkness, that noon was changed into midnight". These two men subsequently were converted to Christianity by the preaching of St. Paul. (Acts 17, 34. Romans 16, 14).

But when Jesus had died, other great miracles occurred, as we see from our text. St. Matthew says: "*And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.*"

The Temple was divided into three parts: the *Most Holy*, the *Holy*, and the *Court*. The Most Holy and the Holy were separated by a veil. This veil was four inches thick, thirty cubits long, and thirty cubits broad. Into the Holy the priests would go daily and bring sacrifices unto the Lord. Into the Most Holy the high priest, and he alone, would go on the great Day of Atonement to sprinkle the blood of a bullock for his own sins, and the blood of a goat for the sins of the people, upon the Mercy Seat. (Lev. 16, 14, 15).

When Jesus had died on the cross this veil, separating the Most Holy from the Holy of the Temple, was rent in twain, from top to bottom. That was a miracle, for no human hand had touched that heavy veil; no, the invisible hand of God rent it in twain. The officiating priests, present in the Holy of the Temple, now could see the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy. Matthew, Mark, and Luke mention the rending of that veil. All three evangelists mention this fact, because it was of such tremendous significance for sinful mankind. By the rending of that veil God wanted to teach all men the great and far-reaching importance of the death of His only-begotten Son. He wanted to teach, that by the death of Jesus an end had been made forever of all the Jewish sacrifices, which had been types of Christ's sacrifice which He now had of-

fered up on the altar of the cross, for the sins of all mankind. The Old Testament covenant now had come to an end, and the New Testament covenant had been established, that is, the reconciliation of the just and righteous God with sinful mankind had now taken place. Since Jesus, the Lamb of God, had been sacrificed on the altar of the cross for the sins of all men, there was no more need of sacrifices such as had been enjoined by God during the Old Testament covenant. (See: Hebrews 9).

Furthermore, St. Matthew tells us in our text: "*And the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened.*" Again, miracles upon miracles! It was a mighty earthquake. History tells us that many cities throughout Asia Minor were totally destroyed by it. Yea, on Calvary itself big rocks were rent. Also the massive steps leading up to the Temple, which were built of solid stones, were rent, as St. Jerome avers. But, beloved friends, no people *lost* their lives by that great earthquake; on the contrary, some people *returned* to life, for the graves were opened, and many saints became alive, and came out of their graves after the resurrection of Jesus, and appeared unto many in the Holy City. Indeed, miracles upon miracles! Such things never happened before, nor afterwards. An earthquake by which many saints were resurrected is, indeed, something most wonderful; it was a great miracle of God. Those saints came out of the graves with glorified bodies, like unto the glorified body of the risen Savior. What became of them? There is no doubt about it, that they ascended into heaven with the Lord Jesus, for the Psalmist had prophesied: "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." This shout was not only made by the holy angels, but also by saints, and why not by these saints spoken of in our text? As the Lord Jesus on the Day of Judgment shall not only be accompanied by all the holy angels, but also by many saints. (Jude 14), we may firmly believe that on the day He ascended into heaven, He was not only accompanied by the holy angels, but also by many saints. One thing is certain: Those resurrected saints did not again die, for if that had been the case, the holy evangelists would have revealed it in their Gospels.

Such, beloved friends, were the remarkable evidences in nature that accompanied the death of Jesus. By those miracles God the Father made manifest the fact that Jesus of Nazareth, His only-begotten Son, is indeed that Promised One, that one and only Savior of a lost and condemned sinner-world.



Such evidences were bound to have mighty influences upon those people who witnessed them. And so it was. Of this I shall now speak to you in the second place.

2.

St. Matthew, furthermore, says in our text: "*Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly, this was the Son of God!*"

This centurion, and those men with him, watching Jesus, were Romans, Gentiles. It was customary with the Romans that, whenever they had crucified some one, a centurion and a number of soldiers stood guard until the crucified person had died. After the crucified one had died, the centurion and his men left the place of crucifixion. In Gentile provinces, the crucified ones were not even taken from the cross; but it was not so in Judea. As soon as the centurion with the guards had left, the Jews would take the crucified one from the cross and inter him, unless some near friends or relatives, by special permission of the Roman governor, would tend to his burial.

When that great earthquake occurred, and when the rocks were rent, and the graves opened, those rough men watching Jesus and the two malefactors who were crucified with Him, began to fear; they were amazed. They frequently had guarded crucified persons, but never before had they been witnesses of such remarkable evidences in nature as manifested themselves at the death of this Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Those remarkable evidences to them were proofs for the fact that Jesus must be far more than a mere man. St. Mark tells us, that the centurion had become amazed already when he heard Jesus cry out with a loud voice: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!" Never before had he heard a dying man on the cross cry out with a loud voice, for the crucified ones became so weak, that they could hardly utter a whisper. The centurion was an expert in these matters and, therefore, he was amazed when he heard Jesus cry out with such a loud voice: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!" And when he saw the earthquake, and all that took place, he cried out: "*Truly, this was the Son of God!*" And the watching soldiers confessed the very same thing. They were all convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Son of God.

These were the influences which those wonderful evidences in



nature, that accompanied the death of Jesus, had upon those rude men. They knew nothing of the Word of God, and, therefore, knew nothing of the prophecies concerning the King of the Jews, that is, of the promised Messiah. They had nothing but their common sense to guide them in these wonderful things, but, nevertheless, they realized that Jesus must be the Son of the almighty God.

But also the godless Jews, who had so much abused Jesus of Nazareth, changed their minds concerning Him, for St. Luke says that all the people beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned unto Jerusalem. They no longer mocked Jesus, nor did they any longer deride Him; no, they smote upon their breasts and went away. By smiting upon their breasts they showed that it grieved them, that they had maltreated Jesus. Now they realized that they had wronged Jesus; that they had sinned against Him. It worried them, that they had listened to the chief priests and elders, and that they had cried out: "Let Him be crucified! His blood be upon us, and upon our children!" And when they heard the Roman centurion cry out: "*Truly, this was the Son of God!*" they could not suppress the thought, that Jesus must be that promised Messiah. Though they smote upon their breasts, yet the evangelists say nothing about their repentance. Oh, that they had not only smitten their breasts, but had also fallen down upon their knees and had implored God for forgiveness of their sins! Had they done that, beloved fellow-Christians, the awful destruction of their Temple and city might have been stayed. This, however, they did not do, but they quietly left Calvary, and they did not even try to prevent Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus from burying Jesus.

St. Matthew closes our text, saying: "*And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto Him; among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.*"

Wonder what those pious women did, when they saw those remarkable evidences in nature, that accompanied the death of Jesus, and when they heard the Roman centurion, and saw that the ungodly Jews smote upon their breasts and returned to Jerusalem? Undoubtedly, beloved friends, they thanked God for the redemption which He had wrought through the death of His dear Son. From what they saw and heard, they must have been greatly

strengthened in their faith that Jesus is the Son of God, and the one and only Savior of the sinful world.

We, too, beloved friends, this day have stood under the cross of our beloved Savior, and we, too, have beheld those wonderful evidences in nature that accompanied His death. Should it be possible that there be anyone among us, who must not cry out with the Roman centurion: "*Truly, this was the Son of God!*"? And should it be possible that we have not been strengthened in our faith, even as those pious matrons from Galilee? Surely not.

Oh, of what great comfort those remarkable evidences in nature must be to every one of us! The veil in the Temple was rent in twain, because no more sacrifices are necessary for the sins of the world, since Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was sacrificed for them, and as His one sacrifice is sufficient for all times. The redemption of the sinful world is now an established fact.

God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, that on the Day of Judgment, when all the graves shall be opened, we may come forth from our graves with glorified bodies to meet Him, who died that we might live eternally! Amen.

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## Jesus of Nazareth the Only Savior of Mankind.

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John 19, 31—37.

The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day, (for that Sabbath-day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled. A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.

In our last Lenten service I called your devout attention to the remarkable evidences in nature, that accompanied the death of Jesus. Indeed, those evidences were most remarkable, most wonderful; they were great miracles. The dense darkness, that covered the earth for three full hours, was not caused by an eclipse of the sun, for that was impossible, as it was full moon at that time; solar eclipses, however, never take place during full moon, but always during new moon, when the sun and the moon are in conjunction on the same side of the earth, and, furthermore, the sun cannot be totally eclipsed for three full hours, as everybody knows, and, besides, an eclipse of the sun does not cover the whole earth with dense darkness. By the great earthquake cliffs were rent, and the graves were opened, and many saints arose from their sleep, and appeared unto many in the Holy City after the resurrection of the Savior. That, indeed, was most wonderful: an earthquake not *destroying* the lives of people, but *bringing back to life* many saints. Again, the heavy veil in the Temple, which separated the Most Holy from the Holy, was also rent in twain, and that from top to bottom. Yea, miracles upon miracles accompanied the death of Jesus of Nazareth, the one and only Savior of mankind.

Those wonderful things that took place in the hour of the Savior's death, made deep impressions upon all people that witnessed them. St. Luke tells us that the people, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned to their

homes, and Matthew says that the Roman centurion, and the soldiers that were with him, guarding Jesus, cried out: "Truly, this was the Son of God!"

Those remarkable evidences in nature, those miracles, which accompanied the death of Jesus, although they must make deep impressions upon all of us, are, however, not as important unto us and all true Christians, as those facts are, which are reported in our text. The facts reported in our text are the very Gibraltar upon which our Christian faith is founded. Standing upon this Gibraltar, my dear fellow-Christians, we can jubilantly confess our faith in Jesus Christ, as in the true and only Savior of the sinful world. By the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with our text, the theme for my present discourse shall now be:—

### Jesus of Nazareth Is the Only Savior of Mankind.

This is an undeniable fact,

1. *Because His legs were not broken; and*
2. *Because His side was pierced by a spear.*

#### 1.

St. John says in our text: "*The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath-day, (for that Sabbath-day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs.*"

The Romans never took the crucified from the cross, nor did they bury them after death; no, they left them on the cross until some beasts of prey (hyenas or dogs) tore them down, or until they fell from the cross. The Romans, moreover, never "broke the legs" of the crucified, that is, they never killed them, but simply left them on the cross until they died. History tells us, that once in a while the crucified would hang on the cross for two and even three days before they died.

But in the Jewish land it was different, and the Romans would always fulfill the wishes of the Jews. When, for example, a Jew had been crucified, and if the Jewish authorities, or the relatives of the crucified one would petition the Roman governor to have

the bones of the crucified one broken, that is, to have him killed, so that his body would not be left on the cross over night, he would readily grant such a request, but, of course, he would always send some of his soldiers to do the killing, otherwise the Jews might have taken down the crucified one alive.

The reason the Jews would not leave a crucified person on the cross over night was this: God had said by the mouth of Moses: "If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." (Deut. 21, 22, 23). The Jews did not crucify any man, but they stoned a man to death. But if a man had committed a shocking crime and had been stoned to death, he would be hanged upon a tree as a warning example. Any one thus hanged upon a tree was considered an outcast from the nation, one rejected by God and man. It was, therefore, considered a great disgrace to be stoned to death and then to be hanged upon a tree. A Jew could not think of a more disgraceful death than such a one. When evening was come, such a one would be taken down and interred in a very shallow grave.

That was the reason the Jews came to the Roman governor, and asked him to have the bones of the crucified broken, to have them killed before sunset, so that the accursed could be taken down and buried. The governor at once gave orders to some of his soldiers to kill the three crucified men on Calvary, if they had not already died. They did as the governor had commanded them, for we read in our text: "*Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him.*" The two malefactors (Dismas and Gesmas) were killed by them. Jesus, however, had already died when they came to Him, and therefore they did not break His legs. This fact is of utmost importance, my friends, for it is an incontrovertible proof of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is in deed and in truth the *Christ*, that is, the promised Messiah. Had His legs been broken, He could not have been the true Messiah, or Savior. Why not? Because it had been prophesied that the legs of Messiah should not be broken. In order to impress this fact upon the minds and hearts of the Israelites, the Lord God had instituted the Ordinance of the Pass-over; for thus we read in Exodus 12, 3—10: "Speak ye (Moses



and Aaron) unto all the congregation of Israel, saying. In the tenth day of this month (Nisan) they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house (family). And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats; and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.” And in verse 46 we read: “In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; *neither shall ye break a bone thereof.*” And again, in Numbers 9, 12, the Lord said in regard to the paschal lamb: “They shall leave none of it unto the morning, *nor break any bone of it:* according to all the ordinances of the Pass-over they shall keep it.” And why should not the bones of the paschal lamb be broken? Because it was a *type* of the Lamb of God, that is, of Jesus Christ, the God-man Savior of the world. (John 1, 29).

This the Jews knew very well, especially the elders, scribes, and Pharisees. That is the reason they were in such great haste. It is very probable that they had sent their petition, that the legs of the crucified men be broken, to the governor already before noon, that is, before the dense darkness came on. That the soldiers, however, did not arrive on Calvary until about three o'clock in the afternoon, was due, no doubt, to the gross darkness which covered the whole land. Had the legs of Jesus been broken, my beloved friends, He could not have been the true Messiah. Then the elders and scribes could have truthfully said to the people, that Jesus of Nazareth was not that promised Messiah, because it had been written concerning Him: “*A bone of Him shall not be broken.*” But God thwarted the evil designs of the chiefs of the

Jews. Before the soldiers arrived, He had taken the soul of His only-begotten Son into His bosom. Thus the scripture was fulfilled that saith: "*A bone of Him shall not be broken.*"

This fact is of the most far-reaching importance to us, my beloved friends; for now we can be quite sure that Jesus of Nazareth is in deed and in truth the true Messiah, the true Savior of the sinful world. He is that Lamb of God, "brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Is. 53, 7), and not a bone of Him was broken.

But not only this scripture: "*A bone of Him shall not be broken.*" was literally fulfilled, but also that other scripture: "*They shall look on Him whom they pierced.*" And also the fulfillment of this scripture is an incontrovertible proof of the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is in deed and in truth the promised Messiah, the true Savior of the world. And of this I shall now speak to you in the second place.

## 2.

St. John tells us in our text: "*But when they (the soldiers) came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.*"

By the mouth of the Prophet Zechariah the Lord had prophesied: "*I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced.*" (Chap. 12, 10). By these words it was foretold that in the New Testament covenant the Holy Spirit should be poured out upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This was done on the first Christian Pentecost, and not less than three thousand Israelites were converted to Jesus, the crucified and resurrected Savior of the world. Just then and there, those converted Jews looked upon Him who had been pierced by the spear of that Roman soldier. They looked upon Him with the eyes of faith, and they mourned for Him, as for an only son, as Zechariah also had prophesied.

The Messiah, or Savior of the world should be *pierced* according to divine prophecy. And thus it came to pass. Those Roman soldiers had received orders from Pontius Pilate to go to Mount Calvary, and break the bones of the crucified in case they had not already died. That Jesus already had died, neither the governor, nor the soldiers anticipated, for St. Mark says: "And Pilate marvelled if He were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead." (Chap. 15,

44). That one of the soldiers, from pure impulse, pierced the side of Jesus, was done by divine impulsions, that the scripture might be fulfilled, that saith: "*They shall look on Him whom they pierced.*"

"*And forthwith came there out blood and water\*;*" says St. John in our text. When that Roman soldier pierced the side of Jesus, who was already dead, blood and water came forth out of the wound at once. That was not natural, for when a person has died, his blood coagulates; it does not gush forth. But not only *blood*, but also *water*, distinct from the blood, not mixed with the blood, came from the opened side of the Savior.

For us Christians, however, the weight of evidence for the true Messiahship of Jesus lies not so much in the fact that blood and water issued from His open side, but in the fact that He was *pierced*. If He had not been pierced, beloved fellow-Christians, scripture would not have been fulfilled, and, therefore, Jesus could not have been the *true* Messiah or Savior. Nevertheless, Christians also try to explain the phenomenon of the flowing blood and water from the dear Savior's side. I am persuaded that this is the true explanation according to the Bible: Jesus of Nazareth is not only a *true man*, but at the same time the *very Son of God*; He is the *God-man*. By the mouth of the Psalmist David it was said, by inspiration of God: "Thou wilt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." (Ps. 16, 10). To this prophecy, St. Peter directs the attention of his audience in his great sermon which he delivered on the first Christian Pentecost at Jerusalem, as we see from Acts 2, 27, and St. Paul did the very same thing in one of his sermons which he preached at Antioch, as we are told in Acts 13, 34. As soon as a mere man dies, corruption begins at once, and, therefore, his blood thickens. It was not so with Jesus of Nazareth, because "His body took from that moment a different path from that of death: it entered upon that of glorification." He, being the very Son of God, could not see corruption. But as I have al-

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\* "Is the fact of the outflowing of the blood and water to be regarded as a natural phenomenon? In general, undoubtedly, when a dead body is pierced, no liquid comes forth from it; nevertheless, if one of the large vessels is reached, it may happen that there will flow from the wound a blackish blood covered with a coating of serum. Can this be what John calls *blood and water*? This is improbable . . . The expression, *blood and water*, naturally denotes two substances flowing simultaneously, but to the eyes of the spectators distinct." Godet.

ready said, the weight of evidence lies in the fact that Jesus was *pierced*, for that He should be pierced, was foretold by the mouth of God's prophet. If this prophecy had failed of fulfillment, Jesus of Nazareth could not have been the true Messiah, and, therefore, not the true Savior of mankind.

St. John closes our text, saying: "*And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced.*" That we and all other men, who hear or read this account of the holy apostle, might believe that Jesus of Nazareth is in deed and in truth that Promised One, that Messiah of God, the one and only Savior of mankind, that is the reason he tells us those two facts: *That no bone of Jesus was broken, and, that His side was pierced.*

Indeed, *all* prophecies concerning the Messiah were literally fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth! There cannot, therefore, be the least doubt in any candid mind that He, and He alone, is, and must be, the *true Savior* of the sinful world. And all those poor sinners, who believe in Him, that is, who put all their trust in Him and in His work of redemption, will be eternally saved; "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3, 16).

May God grant, for the sake of His beloved Son Jesus Christ, who made full expiation for the sins of all mankind, that we may believe this with all our heart, and be eternally saved! Amen.

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## Jesus Laid to Rest.

Mark 15, 42—47.

And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable councillor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if He were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher. And Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, beheld where He was laid.

During our Lenten services we beheld the world's greatest drama, for we saw how the Innocent One, He who knew no sin, Jesus of Nazareth, the one and only Savior of the sinful world, was maltreated by Jews and Gentiles, and how He finally died on the accursed tree of the cross on Mount Calvary. It was, indeed, an awful, a heart-rending spectacle to behold! Never before, nor afterwards, was there a crime committed such as we have witnessed; for never before, nor afterwards, did an innocent person suffer and endure what *the Innocent One* endured and suffered! We were amazed at the awful sight which we beheld. We were bewildered at such hellish wickedness perpetrated by human beings. We marvelled, because the just and righteous God did not interfere in order to prevent such awful wickedness and such travesty on justice. All of us, no doubt, would have heaped curses and anathemas upon those wicked, blood-thirsty Jews and Romans, if one thing had not been clear to us, that is, if we had not learned that those cruel people were also our representatives in that greatest drama of all ages. We learned that our sins helped to crucify the Savior of the world. We also learned that the just and righteous God laid our sins and our iniquities upon His only-begotten Son, who had volunteered to become our Savior, and that He punished Him as the substitute of all sinners. We were convinced, by what we heard and saw, that Jesus of Nazareth is in deed and in truth that promised Messiah, the one and only Savior of mankind. And we rejoiced with all our heart, that He did redeem us from sin, death, and the power of the devil, for if He had declined to become our Savior, then, beloved friends, we could not



have been redeemed, could not have been saved, for there is salvation in none other than in Him alone. (Acts 4, 12). Standing under the cross of Jesus, we smote upon our breasts, because our sins had caused Him such untold misery, sufferings, and cruel death. but knowing His divine love for us, we folded our hands, and chanted this song:—

To Thee, Lord Jesus, thanks we give,  
Who diedst for us that we might live,  
And through Thy holy, precious blood  
Hast made us righteous before God.

We pray Thee, O true God and Man,  
Who wast for our offenses slain:  
Save us from everlasting death,  
And cheer us, when we yield our breath.

Defend us, Lord, from sin and shame;  
Help us by Thine almighty name  
To bear our crosses patiently,  
To trust in Thy great agony. —

And thence the full assurance gain  
That Thou wilt e'er our Friend remain,  
And not forsake us in our strife,  
Until we enter into life.

And while we were thus chanting, beloved fellow-Christians, a true and good man was pleading with the Roman governor Pontius Pilate for the body of our blessed Savior. Pontius Pilate consented to let him have the sacred body of Jesus. This good and true disciple of Jesus was Joseph of Arimathea. What he and his friends did, St. Mark relates in our text: They buried Jesus. By the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with our text, let me now direct your attention to:—

#### **The Burial of Jesus Christ.**

Let me show,

1. *That Jesus received an honorable burial; and*
2. *That His burial is of great comfort to us.*

#### **1.**

The Romans never took down the corpses of the crucified from the cross; no, they would leave them on the cross until they would fall through decay or until some beasts of prey would tear them down, and prey upon them. Not so, however, the Jews. They would never leave a crucified one on the cross over night. If the crucified one was not dead before sunset, then the Jews would see to it

that he was killed, his body taken down, and buried. Of course, the Roman governor alone had the authority to order the killing of such a one; but he never refused to give such orders, if he was requested to do so. The governor, however, never would permit anyone to take down the body of a crucified person, until he was assured by the captain of the guard, that death had come. This is what Pontius Pilate also did when Joseph of Arimathea came to him, and asked for permission to take down the body of Jesus and bury it, as we see from our text.

Ordinarily the crucified would be taken down and buried in a shallow grave. A hole, about two feet deep, was dug, and the corpse thrown into it, just as it was, and then covered with ground. It often happened that even during the first night beasts of prey would dig up the corpse and feast upon it. In other words, the crucified would be buried, as though they were mere brutes. This was done with a specific purpose. A crucified person was considered an outcast, and for this reason he was not given an honorable burial.

Such a *disgraceful burial* the Jews had also intended for Jesus of Nazareth, as we learn from Isaiah 53, 9, where it was prophesied: "A grave was allotted to Him with the wicked, but He was with a rich man in death."\* This prophecy was literally fulfilled, as we see from our text, for St. Mark says: "*And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable councillor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if He were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher. And Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, beheld where He was laid.*" And St. John tells us, that another honorable man, also a councilor, by the name of Nicodemus, helped Joseph. Nicodemus was also a disciple of Jesus. He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. (John 19. 39). They laid the

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\* For this literal translation see: Dr. Stoeckhardt, *Passions-predigten*, II, 155.

sacred body of Jesus into a new sepulcher near Calvary, which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. They wrapped His body in new fine linen, and put the mixture of myrrh and aloes upon it. In this way the most honorable among the Jews would be buried. After they had laid His body to rest in that new sepulcher, they rolled a big stone before the door of the same. The pious women present then also left the sepulcher, with the intention to come back after the great Sabbath and anoint the body of Jesus with sweet spices. They had to make haste, for at six o'clock the great Sabbath began. Thus, beloved friends, Jesus received an *honorable burial*. The plans of His enemies had been thwarted again.

It is indeed true, that Jesus was not at all in need of that precious mixture of myrrh and aloes which Nicodemus had brought, for His body was not in need of any precious spices to arrest the process of corruption, for the body of Jesus was not to see corruption. (Ps. 16, 10). His body could not see corruption, because He was sinless. Only the bodies of sinners see corruption in the grave. Jesus wanted to remain in His grave only unto the third day. Not only to His disciples, but also to His enemies, Jesus had said that He would rise again on the third day. (Luke 18, 33; John 2, 19, 20).

Oh, that His disciples had only believed Him! If they had believed Him, then, beloved friends, they would not have wept and lamented when He died, and they would not have tried to preserve His body from corruption by myrrh and aloes and sweet spices. But they believed not. They had hoped that He should have redeemed Israel. (Luke 24, 21), and now things had turned against their hopes. They could only weep and lament. And yet, they were grateful unto Pontius Pilate for having given them the body of Jesus, so that they could give Him an honorable burial. Had they firmly believed the words of Jesus concerning His resurrection on the third day, they would have had great comfort.

The burial of Jesus, beloved fellow-Christians, brings great comfort to us and all true believers in Him. Of this fact I shall now speak to you in the second place.

## 2.

The first great comfort accruing from the burial of Jesus Christ is this, that we can be quite sure of the fact that He was really dead. It is of great importance unto us to be sure of His death, for His death is our life. Had He not died, we could not

be eternally saved, for the Bible teaches that we were reconciled to God by the death of Jesus. (Rom. 5, 10; Rev. 5, 9). We must be sure that Jesus was dead when He was taken from the cross. This assurance we have from the fact that He was buried by His friends. His friends surely would not have buried Him, if He had not been dead. Yes, Jesus had died on the cross. Pontius Pilate had acted very prudently when he first assured himself of the death of Jesus, before he permitted Joseph of Arimathea to take His body. St. Mark says in our text: *"And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable councilor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marveled if He were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph."* There cannot be the least doubt that the centurion gave a true report to the governor. Even if he had erred, that Roman soldier who pierced the side of Jesus with a spear, would have killed Him. When that soldier thrust his spear into the side of Jesus, he meant to say, "If Thou art not dead already, this will finish Thee!" There cannot be the least doubt about it that Jesus was dead when He was buried by His disciples Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. His death is our life.

The burial of Jesus is also comforting unto us and all true Christians, because by His burial He hallowed the graves of all true believers in Him. Christians really need not fear death, nor the grave, since Jesus died and was buried. All true Christians can jubilantly cry out with the great St. Paul, saying with all their heart: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Yes, we Christians need not fear death, nor the grave, for temporal death opens for us the door of Paradise when angels arrive there with our soul, and the grave is nothing than a resting place for our body until the great Day of Judgment when Jesus will raise it from its sleep. It is written: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors." (Rev. 14, 13). The bodies of all Christians in the graves are only sleeping.

Yes, indeed, beloved fellow-Christians, since Jesus has hallowed our graves by His burial, we need not fear death, nor the grave. Our bodies, though they will decay, yet, in the eyes of God,

they sleep until that great resurrection morning when Jesus shall call them back to life, for it is written: "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." (John 5, 28, 29). The bodies of the true believers shall come forth from their graves glorified, they shall be fashioned like unto the glorious body of the resurrected Savior. (Phil. 3, 21). "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual (glorified) body. . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Cor. 15, 42—44, 53—57). Oh, how happy all true Christians can be, my beloved friends! Through faith in Jesus Christ they overcome the horrors of death and the grave, and jubilantly they say with the Christian Poet Muehlenberg:—

I would not live alway; no, welcome the tomb;  
Since Jesus hath lain there, I dread not its gloom:  
There sweet be my rest till He bid me arise  
To hail Him in triumph descending the skies.

Who, who would live alway, away from his God?  
Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,  
Where the rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,  
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns:

Where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,  
Their Savior and brethren transported to greet,  
While the anthems of rapture unceasingly roll,  
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul?

May God grant for the sake of Jesus Christ, that all of us may die in the Lord when our last hour is at hand, and that our mortal bodies may rest in our graves undisturbed until the Lord shall call them back to life, and then may we be and remain with Him forevermore! Amen.



## “He is Risen!”

Mark 16, 1—8.

And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away; for it was very great. And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; He is risen; He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed; neither said they any thing to any man, for they were afraid.

A few years ago an association was organized under the name of “Religious Education Association”. That name sounds well to Christians, but in this case it is a misnomer, for the “Religious Education Association” is not what its name would indicate. For what is the aim of this association? Its aim is antichristian. The leaders of the “Religious Education Association” wish to drop all cardinal doctrines of the Bible by substituting for them the doctrines of men. They want to introduce into our American churches and Sunday-schools pagan philosophy under the name of modern Christianity. They propose to omit all *specific* Christian doctrines from all Christian literature, as, for example, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, the doctrine of the total depravity of man in his natural state, the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ Jesus, the doctrine of the vicarious atonement of our Savior for the sins of the world, the doctrine of the deity of Jesus of Nazareth, and many other important Christian doctrines. They propose to introduce a *new* Christianity — a Christianity *without Christ*. The aims of the “Religious Education Association” are, therefore, antichristian to the very core.

The leaders of the “Religious Education Association” would have us believe, that they are diligent Bible-students and that,

after a thorough investigation of the Bible, they had come to the conclusion that the old Christian creed is in need of a thorough revision, that is, an abnegation of what theologians term the *cardinal doctrines* of the Christian religion. But the truth is, that these men have not searched the Holy Scriptures, but only the writings of the so-called Higher Critics, who, in their estimation, cannot err.

It is a sad fact, indeed, that so many of our American professors and preachers accept *without* thorough investigation what some professors and preachers of Europe offer to them as sound Bible-doctrine. If these American professors and preachers would only *study* the Bible, if they would only *search* the Scriptures, then they surely would not suffer themselves to be simply the unthinking talking machines of some of the foreign antichristian professors and preachers. Well may the word of St. Paul be applied to them, viz.: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." (Rom. 1, 22).

But, my dear friends, is not this criticism unjust? I frankly answer, No, it is not. This day — Easterday — proclaims the fact to all men, that the old, old Gospel as it always has been preached by all orthodox preachers since the days of the holy apostles, is true, and every doctrine, which does not conform to it is false. Easterday with its glorious message refutes all the claims of the Higher Critics, and brands them as infidels and non-Christians. Let me, then, beloved friends, now direct your devout attention to:

**The Christians' Joyous Easter-Proclamation:**

1. *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God!*
2. *Jesus has reconciled all men to God!*

1.

Jesus of Nazareth always emphasized His divine Sonship. When the unbelieving Jews said unto Him: "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?" He said unto them: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." (John 8, 57, 58). Unto His Apostle Philip Jesus said: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." (John 14, 9). And again He said to the unbelieving Jews: "I and My Father are one." (John 10, 30). Even under oath He testified to His divine Sonship; for when Caiaphas, the high priest of the Jews, asked Him, saying, "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou

be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said." (Matt. 26, 63. 64).

His disciples believed and confessed Him to be the Son of the true God; for when Jesus asked them: "Whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16, 16). What Peter confessed, all true Christians joyfully have confessed in all ages up to the present time. The joyous Easter-proclamation of all Christians always has been: *Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God!* Of course, infidels and unbelievers always have become offended at this Easter-proclamation of the Christians. When the Jewish rabble heard it, they cried out: "Let Him be crucified! Let Him be crucified!" (Matt. 27, 22. 23). And when St. Paul proclaimed the glorious and saving Gospel of Jesus Christ at Athens, "certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him, and they said: 'What will this babbler say?'" (Acts 17, 18).

But, dear fellow-Christian, we need not be ashamed to proclaim to all men, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of the living God. Why need we not be ashamed to proclaim this joyous Easter-message to the whole world? I answer, Because this message is *true*.

Jesus of Nazareth was not a mere man, as the Higher Critics contend. No, He was and is to this very day the God-man. His deity has been established beyond any possible doubt. Did He not go about throughout the whole of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, not only preaching the Gospel of salvation to lost sinners, but also doing innumerable miracles? Did He not heal the sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf, the lepers, the incurables of all kinds? Did He not still the tempest on the Galilean Sea, when His disciples were in danger of death? Did He not even wake the dead? What did He do at Nain, when He came to that village and the people carried out the corpse of a young man, who was the only son of his widowed mother? He said to the weeping mother: "Weep not!" And to the dead son: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!" (Luke 7, 13. 14). And what happened? The young man did arise. — And at Capernaum in the house of Jairus, the superintendent of the school, whose only daughter had departed this life, He only spoke the words: "Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise!" (Mark 5, 41). And not in vain did He speak thus; for the damsel arose, and so the tears of the school superintendent at Capernaum and his wife were dried up at

once. — And, my friends, have we not often read the wonderful story of Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary? Lazarus was taken sick, and his sisters sent word to Jesus, and asked Him to come. But Jesus did not answer their call at once. When He came, Lazarus already had been dead four days. Martha said to Jesus: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give Thee." Jesus said to her: "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha said to Him: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Martha called her sister Mary. And when she saw the Lord, she also said to Him: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Jesus said to her: "Where have ye laid him?" And they said unto Him: "Lord, come and see." When Jesus had come to the grave, and after the stone had been taken from the door of the sepulcher, He called the man, who had been dead four days by his name and said: "Lazarus, come forth!" And what happened? "He that was dead came forth." (John 11). All these wonderful miracles of Jesus of Nazareth prove beyond any doubt, that He is the Son of the living God.

But we have even greater proof! The greatest of all proofs for the deity of Jesus Christ is His glorious resurrection from death and the grave on Easterday. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, then, of course, He could not be the Son of the living God. Had He not risen from His grave, He would have been an imposter, for He said, that He would rise on the third day. Repeatedly He had said unto His friends and enemies, that He would be slain, but that He would rise from His grave on the third day. Even on His last journey to the city of Jerusalem He said to His disciples, who accompanied Him: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man, shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again." (Luke 18, 31—33). His words were literally fulfilled. He was delivered unto the Gentiles, and was mocked, and spitefully entreated, and scourged, and crucified, and buried, and *He rose again on the third day*: for in our text we read: "*And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene,*



and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who will roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away; for it was very great. And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; He is risen; He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him."

My dear friends, I ask you, Is not the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ an irrefutable proof for His deity? It is, therefore, inconceivable how any man can deny the deity of Jesus Christ. We Christians need not be ashamed to proclaim the joyous Easter-message: *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God!* Yea, we can also jubilantly proclaim the fact to all men, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the *Savior, who has reconciled all men to God.*

## 2.

The Son of God became man. Why? The Bible tells us, that He became true man in order to redeem sinful men from eternal damnation. Jesus Himself said: "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." (Matt. 18, 11). And again He said: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3, 16, 17).

Jesus Christ saved the sinful world. He saved all sinners through His bitter sufferings and death. It is written: "God hath made Him (Jesus Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin (who had no sin, who never committed a sin,) that we (we sinners) might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5, 21). God the Father put His Son Jesus Christ under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law. (Gal. 4, 4, 5). And the Son of God fulfilled the Law for all men, and He gave Himself as a sacrifice on the cross for all sinners. When the crucified Jesus cried out: "It is finished!" (John 19, 30), the redemption of sinful men was accomplished. God had been reconciled to all sinners. (2 Cor. 5, 18, 19). The sinful world was redeemed — not with gold



or silver, but with the holy and precious blood of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 1, 18, 19).

But, beloved friends, if Christ had remained in His **grave**, if He had not risen on the third day, He would not have fulfilled His promise, and, consequently, He would have been an imposter. Though His resurrection was not necessary to *redeem* us from our sins, yet it was necessary to *prove* that He has truly redeemed us through His sufferings and death. If Christ had not risen, if He had not been resurrected on the third day, then, my friends, we would have no evidence of our redemption, our reconciliation to God. In this sense St. Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." (1 Cor. 15, 17, 18).

The glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ proves, that His Father in heaven was satisfied with the sacrifice of His dear Son. If the Father had not been fully satisfied with the payment which Jesus made for the sins of the world, He surely would not have resurrected Him from death; for how could He have released our Bondsman, as long as our debts had not been paid? Therefore St. Paul writes, that Jesus Christ "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4, 25). He wishes to say that, when the Father raised Jesus from His **grave**, He proclaimed to a redeemed sinner-world: "All men are now reconciled to Me! I have forgiven them all their sins for My Son's sake! Pardon is now in store for every one that believeth!" And this declaration of God stands to this very day. All sinners are redeemed. Not one of them need be eternally lost, if he will only accept Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Is it, therefore, not a sad fact, that so many of the redeemed deny Jesus' work of redemption? That so many do not trust in Him as in their *Savior*? Is it not a sad fact, that so many deny Him, who has bought them with His precious blood, and thus bring upon themselves swift destruction? (2 Pet. 2, 1). But it is their own fault that they are eternally lost. They cannot blame God for their damnation. God did everything He could do for them, yet they reject His divine love. He has the Gospel preached unto them, yet they do not believe it. On the Day of Judgment Jesus, who gave Himself for them also, must say unto them, as He was obliged to say with tearful eyes to the unbelieving and self-righteous Jews of Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou

that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not.*" (Matt. 23, 37). Yea, *He* would save them, but *they* would not be saved by Him.

If there are any among us this day who do not truly believe in Jesus Christ, the God-man Savior of the world, I beseech them for love's sake, and by the mercies of God (Philemon 9; Romans 12, 1), not to deny Him, who has bought them with His blood, but rather to trust in Him and His work of redemption, for without faith in Him and His work of redemption there is no eternal salvation for any one; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4, 12), than the name Jesus. His blood alone cleanseth from all sin and unrighteousness. (1 John 1, 7). As you are this day standing at the empty tomb of Him, who was slain for your sins, listening to the joyous Easter-message of the angel: "*Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; He is risen; He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him!*" — I say, my friends, as you are this day standing at the empty tomb of Jesus, you must admit that He is what all true Christians believe Him to be: The Christ, the Son of the living God, and you, a sinner, reconciled to God. Cast away your unbelief, "and be not faithless, but believing!" (John 20, 27). The glorious resurrection of the crucified Savior is an incontrovertible evidence for the truthfulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, rank folly to deny the truthfulness of the Gospel in the face of such evidence.

And all of you, my beloved friends, who do truly believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Col. 2, 8). Be not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is a power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth! (Rom. 1, 16). Joyfully and jubilantly you can join all Christians in their joyous Easter-proclamation: *Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and we through Him are reconciled to God!*

Hallelujah! Amen.

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